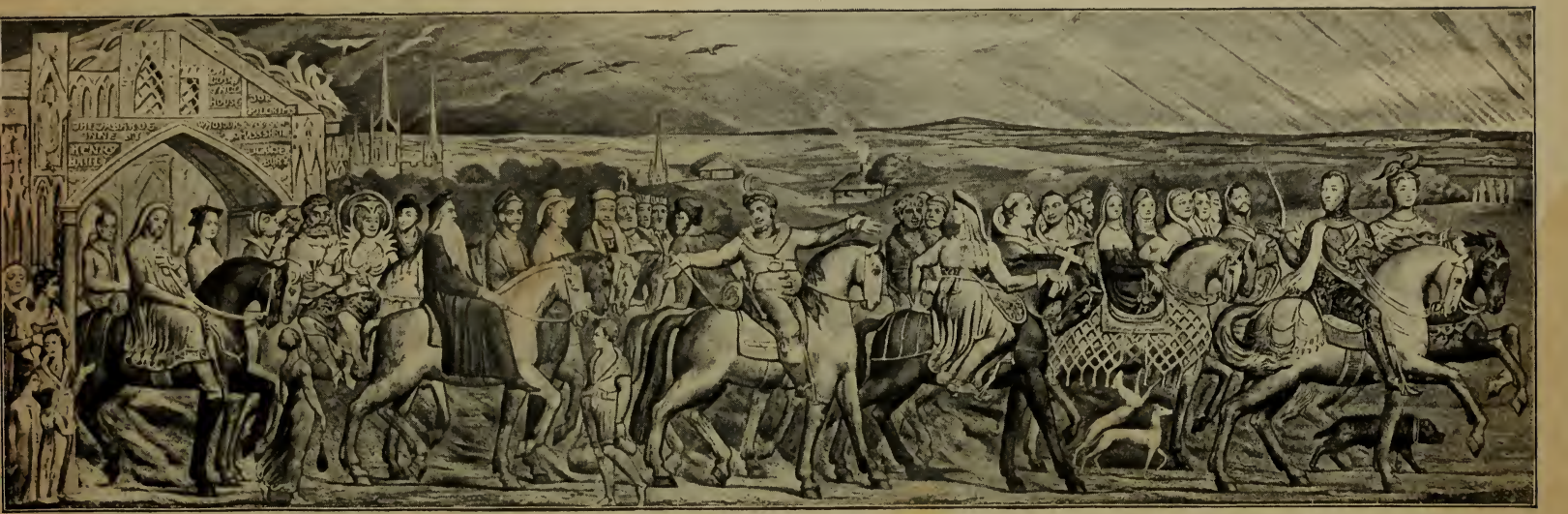

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

After the painting by William Blake

Chaucer, Geoffrey

SELECTIONS FROM CHAUCER

INCLUDING HIS EARLIER AND HIS LATER VERSE AND AN EXAMPLE OF HIS PROSE

EDITED WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

THIS volume is not designed primarily for those who wish to use the text of Chaucer as an introduction to the study of Middle English, but for those who wish to read and enjoy his verse as literature. Such simple essentials of grammar and prosody are, however, provided as the teacher will desire to have in convenient form for reference. No course — even in English — should be made easy, except with the ease that comes, attended by a sense of triumph and delight, through the discipline of persistent effort. But, in the case of Chaucer, there is every reason for deferring more elaborate presentation of what will else seem unmeaning and forbidding detail, until an awakened interest may serve to vitalize and humanize it.

As the purpose of this volume is to illustrate Chaucer's genius, a wider range of selections is included than is usual in such volumes. The *Canterbury Tales* must be amply represented; it is impossible to omit the *Prologue*, *Knight's Tale*, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, *Pardoner's Tale*, and an example of the connecting narrative which forms the framework of the tales. Yet, assuredly, the student should not be allowed to form the impression, as so many do, that Chaucer was so much a man of one work that his others are negligible. Hence, part of one of his earlier long poems, the *House of Fame*, and examples of his lyrics and prose, have been included. This wider range of selection will, it is believed, be welcomed. All the selections cannot, it is true, be read, except with undue rapidity, within the classroom in a single term. But opportunity is given for the teacher's own selection, and for varying more slow and careful reading by rapid sight reading and for the assignment of private readings as themes for appreciative essays.

An experiment is tried in this volume which needs, perhaps, a word of explanation. Every one should begin the reading of Chaucer with the immortal *Prologue*. But it should be read, — not mulled over, — and here the obstacle arises that it offers special difficulty in that it contains so large a number of obsolete or unusual words and meanings. In this single selection, therefore, with which the student starts, glosses have

been added at the side of each line, doing away with the necessity of turning to the *Glossary*. It is hoped that this plan will recommend itself as an aid to unobstructed understanding and enjoyment of the work as literature. It has the further advantage of awakening confidence in the student and encouraging him to read boldly, for pleasure, the selections not provided with such aid.

In the *Notes*, the aim has been to confine comment to what is essential and broadly illustrative, and to keep away from what is narrowly curious or erudite. The *Glossary*, also, has been kept as simple as possible. To give the parts of speech in such a glossary is, or should be, superfluous; and scattered etymological addenda are wholly profitless.

The writer wishes Godspeed to all those who enter the fellowship of those who love Chaucer through this little book!

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INTRODUCTION

I. *Why Study Chaucer?*

One studies Chaucer, in the first place, because every one who has in him the capacity to care for the brightness and beauty of the world, and for varied aspects of life and human nature, moving and diverting, as noted by a most keen and sympathetic observer, as pictured with unfailing art by a poet of rare dramatic power, and as phrased in verse which is exquisite music, will be sure to love the poetry of Chaucer.

This is the first and all-important reason. It is also worth while to find out how Chaucer came to be the great poet he was, to read of the many and different things he did in his busy life, to see how, learning from others, he became a master greater than they.

These things will mean more to us if we first try to see how truly great he was and is, and in what way. We may do this if, putting aside other things for a moment, we see what one work of his, the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, means to the world to-day.

II. *The Prologue To-day*

Over five hundred years ago Chaucer wrote the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*. The poem still holds its place secure as a work of genius, and can be read for pure enjoyment. It will so be read five hundred years hence. Why is this?

Suppose that you were to come across a book written in our own time describing the chance meeting of a number of persons, all of them interesting in one way or another, in some such gathering place as, let us say, the smoking room of a transatlantic liner. They have a common purpose and interest; they are going possibly, for pleasure or on business, to an exposition in Paris. The author represents himself as sitting apart, unobserved, but observ-

ing each and taking note of his appearance, speech, and character. His characters are not selected at random; they represent various phases of American life. There is a general just returned from the Philippines, a clergyman on his vacation, an officer in the Salvation Army, a "captain of industry," a financier, a lobbyist from Washington, a grafting politician, a cowboy, an inventor, mining engineer, noted lawyer, well-known merchant, explorer, newspaper correspondent, railroad man, famous surgeon, actor, aeronaut, jockey, ladies' tailor, and so on. Talk becomes general, and in time each tells a story. In his account of the talk and of the stories told, the author brings out American life in all its diversity of occupations, aims, and interests, practical and ideal, through these characters; each is described so that he is a type, and yet so vividly that he seems to the reader a real person, seen and listened to just as if one had met him in real life. Now suppose further that the author who describes this gathering and what was said and done is above all men the man best fitted to do it — a man of the widest experience, who has known all classes and conditions of people high and low; a practical man of affairs who has been a soldier, a diplomat, a customhouse official, a commissioner in various branches of the public service, a member of Congress. Suppose also that, beside this, he is the most noted author of his time, and, moreover, of the most kindly and genial temper, wise, witty, and (what is better) gifted with such a sense of humor that his fun and drollery bubble up at every turn, but so gentle, too, and of such wide sympathy that, with his wonderful power of putting what he feels into words, he can touch you to the heart unexpectedly, and make you feel, as he feels it, the salt and the sweetness of life. Suppose it were such a man who was describing this gathering for you — would his book not be well worth reading?

Suppose now that five hundred years from to-day men still read such a book, as they surely would read it. Why would they do so? Conditions of life would then be entirely changed; the occupations and aims and interests of men would certainly in many

ways be changed. They would read it for three reasons. One is the interest and curiosity they might feel in finding out what life was like in America five hundred years before, what classes of people there were and why, how people talked, what they thought of and cared for — in general what they made out of life. The second reason is this, that, in spite of the changed conditions of life, the human nature in the book, the motives actuating the characters, the fun and the seriousness of life as the author pictures it, would be quite as true, and quite as interesting, then as now. The third reason is, of course, enjoyment of the skill with which the author had written his book, its artistic excellencé ; for one can turn back to a work of genius written long ago, and enjoy it, and learn from it, if that work of genius was, when written, true to the life of its time and country, and direct in its appeal to the elemental principles of human nature, which do not change.

That is why Chaucer's *Prologue* is read to-day ; that is why it is a famous work in the literature of the world. Just as the reader of five hundred years from now would feel about the book we imagined, so readers who know Chaucer feel about the *Prologue* and the *Canterbury Tales* to which it is an introduction. "But," one might ask, "you can scarcely expect any one to feel as much interest in people that lived five hundred years ago, as in people of one's own time?" Certainly not. Life is always more important and interesting than books, if observed and thought over with intelligence, and things as they are are more important to us to be studied and understood than things as they were a long time ago. But that man suffers a great loss and is much to be pitied, who does not use books to help him see and understand life, not to speak of the enjoyment books can give. And it is absolutely true that this book of Chaucer's is so good a book, that, old as it is, it can better help one to observe and understand life, and, after observing and understanding, to express clearly his thoughts and impressions to himself or to others, than a multitude of books that are written to-day. But, also — what is far more important than any such practical profit — it can help one through its artistic

worth, for it is through the appreciation of artistic beauty that we most surely attain to the highest truth, to the ability to understand the true relations and the true values of things, which is called culture.

III. *The Life of Chaucer*

Geoffrey Chaucer actually held positions like those which we supposed our imaginary author to have held. If in telling of his life I say almost nothing of his literary work, it is for a particular reason, which will appear later.

When Geoffrey Chaucer was born, in 1340, or within a year or two of it, Edward III was on the throne, and had not yet completed his series of costly campaigns in France. John Chaucer, Geoffrey's father, a vintner, or wine merchant, seems to have been connected in some way with the court; to this, it would seem, was due Geoffrey's lifelong connection with the court, and his friendship, perhaps relationship by marriage, with the powerful John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the king's son.

Dr. Furnivall[1] has drawn a delightful picture of what Chaucer's childhood may have been like, before we find any actual record of him: "We have him at his father's wine-shop or tavern in narrow Thames St. chatting, no doubt, with English and foreign seamen, with citizens who came for their wine, helping to fill their pots, perhaps, — a natty, handy lad, but full of quiet fun — messing, I dare say, in Wal-brook, that bounded his father's place; fishing in the Thames, I should think; out on May-day for sweet-scented boughs to dress his father's tavern-pole. At school — St Paul's Cathedral perchance — sharing in all the games and larks that Fitzstephen so well describes some 200 years before; seeing all the grand shows that went on in Smithfield, and London streets; well up in his classes, I'll be bound; the boy the father of the man in this, that he loved his bookës well. Then he goes to serve Prince Lionel's wife as page, and gets his dress of short cloak,

[1] *Life Records of Chaucer*, Chaucer Society, Second Series, 14.

pair of red and black breeches, and shoes, with 3*s.* 6*d.* for necessaries, as Mr. Bond has shown us."

Dr. Furnivall is referring here to the first record we have of Chaucer. This is found on two fragmentary leaves of the household accounts of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster, wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of the king. On these same leaves are entries of payments to "Phillippa Pan" (which means perhaps "Lady of the Pantry"), whom he would like to believe the same Phillippa whom Chaucer afterwards married. Other entries on the same leaves tell us that the countess went to Windsor for the Feast of St. George, celebrated with great pomp in connection with the newly founded order of the Garter, to the funeral of Queen Isabella, and that she visited the lions in the Tower; perhaps Chaucer, as a member of her household, went with her.

Already, then, at sixteen, as a page, Chaucer is connected with the court. The next glimpse of him, when only about nineteen, is as a soldier; boys of nineteen or earlier often saw active service — witness the Squire whom Chaucer describes in the *Prologue*. Chaucer took part in the king's last campaign in France, was taken prisoner, and the king gave for his ransom the sum of £16, — a sum fairly large as compared with other ransoms paid by the king, and certainly one that seems so when one considers that its present value would be about six or eight hundred dollars. On his return he seems to have entered the king's service; at all events, when we next find record of him, he is a yeoman, later an esquire, of the king's household, where he serves as a "Valletus," or valet. Many of the menial services required by royalty, such as in a private household are performed by footman, butler, or maid, were, and in some courts still are, performed by persons of gentle rank. Chaucer and his fellow valets waited on the king at table, while dressing, and elsewhere; made beds; held and carried torches; ran messages and the like. In attendance on the queen there was a lady in waiting named Phillippa (the same Phillippa, perhaps, who was with the Countess of Ulster), and Chaucer married her, possibly by 1366, certainly before 1374. It is

probable that she was sister of Katherine de Swynford (whose maiden name was de Roet), who became John of Gaunt's wife; if so, it is plain why Chaucer throughout his life was befriended by John of Gaunt and the House of Lancaster. At all events, it is certain that Phillippa was of excellent social position, and connected in some way with John of Gaunt. An interesting proof of this is her admission in 1386 into the fraternity of Lincoln Cathedral at the same time with the future Henry IV, Sir Thomas de Swynford, and others, John of Gaunt being present at the ceremony.

In 1366 Geoffrey received the first of many annuities (yearly pensions) and grants given him by the king and by John of Gaunt. Phillippa also received an annuity from the king, and later one from John of Gaunt. The record of the payment of these annuities helps very greatly in keeping track of Chaucer and of his fortunes year by year. His personal and public services, and his marriage, are sufficient to explain these grants of money and wine; there is no evidence that they were given in recognition of his poetic ability. But his poetic gifts contributed, no doubt, to the favor in which he was held; three, perhaps four, of his more important poems have a direct connection with the court.

In 1372 Chaucer received his first appointment to a government office. During the fourteenth century, administration as a branch of government, namely, the management of the financial and other affairs of state with businesslike methods, had been very greatly developed. Formerly men of clerical training had performed such duties, but now the civil service, as we should call it, had begun to offer opportunities for a career to men like Chaucer, who, though not clerics, were well educated. In 1372 Chaucer was employed upon the first of several important diplomatic commissions as one of three commissioners sent to Italy to arrange for a port on the English coast where merchants of Genoa might trade. This journey and a later journey to Milan in 1378 were of the greatest importance, as we shall see, in his literary de-

velopment. He left England in December, and returned in May, 1373, visiting Genoa and Florence. Shortly after his return he was appointed Controller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Hides, and Woolfells in the Port of London. This office required his personal supervision; it was not possible, as in the case of many offices, then and long after, to hold the office and have the work done by a deputy. The holders of the office were enjoined to keep their accounts with their own hands, not to employ deputies, and to hold in their possession the "other part" of the cocket seal, the seal placed upon receipts (hence called cockets) given in witness of payment of dues. The jurisdiction of the two collectors under Chaucer ran from London to Gravesend, and the revenue cutter, as it would be called now, to see that goods were not smuggled in or out, consisted of a rowboat with a single boatman. In 1382 Chaucer was also appointed to the Controllership of the Petty Customs. He held the two offices till 1386, that is, he was an officer of the customs for twelve years. His own annuities and Phillippa's with his salaries brought him in the equivalent of $5000 a year to-day. Moreover, we know that he was guardian of the estates of two minors, and in 1379 had a grant of the value of a large amount of wool exported without payment of duty, which brought him the equivalent of $20,000 in our money. He was employed at times on diplomatic missions — a second journey to Italy, and several to Flanders, France, and elsewhere; one of these was in connection with the projected marriage, which came to nothing, of the young king, Richard, and the daughter of the French king. In 1385 he was made Justice of the Peace for Kent, and in 1386 he was elected Knight of the Shire, that is, member of Parliament, for Kent, where he was then probably living. These appointments were made possible by his having received special permission from the king in 1385 to perform his duties at the customs by deputy.

For a year or two, beginning in 1386, Chaucer was in serious trouble. He lost his position in the customs owing, apparently, to the fact that the regency for the young King was under the

headship of the Duke of Gloucester, and occasion was made to oust him as a follower of the House of Lancaster. Phillippa died, and Chaucer was thus deprived of her pension, and for some reason was obliged to surrender his own. But when King Richard took the royal power into his own hands, Chaucer was soon placed again in office, receiving in 1389 the clerkship of the king's works, which paid about three times the salary of his controllership. His duties were the oversight of the building and repairs in the Palace of Westminster, the Tower, and a number of royal manors. Also, in 1390 he was made a member of a commission to survey the wells, ditches, gutters, sewers, bridges, causeways, weirs, and trenches on the "coast" of the Thames between Gravesend and Woolwich, and in the same year he was appointed to repair the Chapel of St. George at Windsor. Also, in the same year, or in 1391, he was appointed a subforester of North Petherton; this position, no doubt a sinecure, was given him by the Earl of March, the grandson of Duke Lionel, in whose court Chaucer began life as a page.

In 1390 Chaucer had the misfortune to be robbed twice, possibly three times, in one month, losing his horse, money of his own, certain goods, and £20 belonging to the king. This misfortune may have been the cause of his losing both his clerkships in the following year. He was given no further appointments, very probably because he was no longer efficient. The king, however, gave him in 1394 a new annuity. In spite of this, and though he may have been in the service of John of Gaunt's son, Henry, Earl of Derby, he seems to have been in difficulties, and in 1398 was certainly so, as an action for debt was begun against him, making it necessary for him to obtain letters of protection from the king, and he was forced to obtain advances upon his annuities. The king made a further grant to him, but real relief seems only to have come when, in 1398, Richard was deposed, and Henry IV, John of Gaunt's son, assumed the throne. Chaucer at once addressed him in a poem — the *Complaint to his Empty Purse*, with an envoy to Henry — and Henry confirmed the late king's grants

and gave him an annuity of forty marks over and above these. Chaucer might now look forward to a peaceful old age. He took a house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster, on a lease of fifty-three years at a yearly rental of 53*s.* 4*d.* He was not to enjoy his newly won comfort long. On October 25, 1400, he died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey — the first poet to be buried in what is now the "Poet's Corner."

The reason why, in this account of Chaucer's life, little or nothing was said of his writing, is this. Chaucer served as page, soldier, valet to the king, diplomatic envoy, controller of Customs, trustee of the estates of minors, Justice of the Peace, Knight of the Shire, Clerk of the King's Works, Commissioner of Sewers — these offices with their business affairs occupied Chaucer till near the close of his life. They would have been enough, one would think, to form a career in themselves. Yet this man, who plainly approved himself a capable man of business, also made for himself an imperishable name in literature, a place in the first rank of poets, not only in the literature of his country, but in the literature of the world.

Is there a parallel to this achievement? Milton turned aside for twenty years to serve the Commonwealth as Latin Secretary — his duties were largely literary — and returned to poetry at the age of fifty-two to write the poems on which his fame chiefly rests. Authors of note have at some time held offices or been engaged in practical affairs, and physicians, lawyers, statesmen, bankers, have attained some measure of success in literature apart from their professions. Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Fielding, Richardson, Charles Lamb, Hawthorne, Lowell, Disraeli, Trollope, Arnold, Bagehot, John Morley — examples of this sort might be readily multiplied. But there is no parallel to Chaucer's achievement.

IV. *Chaucer's Writings before the Canterbury Tales*

While Chaucer's business duties must to some extent have interfered with his writing, the circumstances of his life in general contributed directly to his literary development. In the first

place it gave him the widest experience at first hand of life, and of men of every station, high and low, from the court circle to the merchants and sailors on the Wool Quay, and the contractors and workmen he dealt with in his building operations — he knew the whole range of English life intimately through social and business intercourse. His connection with the court made him a part of the cultivated society which cared for polite literature and which earliest knew of current literary modes and achievements in the country from which England was drawing her literary inspiration — France. It was for this cultivated society, also, for which he wrote. His social and official position must also have made a wider range of books accessible to him in the possession of influential friends than might be commanded by most men devoted to reading and study. To his connection with the court was due his employment on diplomatic missions which led to the most important influence in his literary development — his acquaintance with Italian literature.

When English literature after the Conquest is considered (Old English literature — that before the Conquest — is another matter), it is seen to possess two important general characteristics which it is worth our while to note here. One is its general similarity in its several kinds: the individuality of the author is not impressed upon his work in any marked or significant way. The other is that practically all the literature in English, as well as the larger part of that written in Latin and French, is secondary and derivative; it is derived from foreign sources, Latin or French. With the period in which Chaucer lived (the so-called third period of Middle English Literature, 1350–1400), a change had already begun — a change which had begun long before in France. Authors who placed an individual stamp upon their work had begun to appear. One sees this change, for example, in the poems of William of Shoreham, though he wrote on trite religious themes, and in Lawrence Minot, England's first patriotic poet. One sees it significantly enough in Chaucer's great predecessor and contemporary, William Langland, who assailed with passionate personal feeling the corruption in the

Church in his *Piers the Plowman.* One sees it in Chaucer's contemporary, the unknown author of *Purity*, *Patience*, the exquisite *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight.* And one sees it most significantly of all in Chaucer. Far the greater part of Chaucer's poetry is directly dependent on the work of others, yet also, unmistakably, it is instinct with his individuality, bears the authentic impress of his personal temperament and genius. How did this come about so notably in his case? Genius — by which we mean a fortunate complex of creative powers — he possessed, but that does not answer the question. The determining influences came, as we shall see, from without England.

We may take it for granted that the range of Chaucer's reading was very wide — we have, indeed, plentiful evidence to that effect in his works. Certain of the classical poets he knew well, Ovid particularly; in theological literature, both the Church Fathers and later literature, he had read widely; so also the scientific literature, the huge encyclopedic works on everything in general, of his time; histories and chronicles also, of which the Middle Ages was so fond; and, of course, French and English romances and fabliaux (short, humorous, generally, in a measure, realistic tales). The list of books we can prove that he at least knew is a most impressive one. A scrupulously exact scholar he was not, but a rapid and eager reader certainly, seizing with zest upon what appealed to him and he could use.[1] But, granting his wide reading and his constant use of what we may call the standard works of his time, we have not yet answered our question.

For this, we must consider Chaucer's relation to the great movement, already in progress (its beginnings lie far back of him and his period) which we call the Renaissance. The essential fact which

[1] Here it may be added that those who accuse Chaucer of blunders (though some he certainly made) or of reading only parts of books do so at their peril, for such accusations have more than once proved false. Whether or no he was an accurate scholar, his translations are little less than marvelous, considering his lack of such facilities as we possess — this appears more particularly in his translations from the Italian, for French he knew, no doubt, as well as English, and Latin he had read from childhood.

underlies this movement in its various manifestations is that the minds of men gradually became freed from blind acceptance of established authority, especially the domination of the Church in every relation of life, intellectual and practical. The workings of this spirit began earlier in France than in England; and Chaucer came under its influence through a work which was shaped by, and intensified, this spirit, the continuation of Guillaume de Loris's *Romaunt of the Rose* by Jean de Meun, written about 1277. The first part, by Guillaume de Loris, an allegorical romance of love, also affected Chaucer, but the influence of Jean de Meun is far more important. Jean de Meun's real subject is life, not sentiment — and allegory applied to life inevitably leads to satire, that is, to a criticism of life. Jean de Meun's independence in thinking as he pleased, his ability to see life and to pass judgment upon it from his personal point of view, the gayety, wit, and spirit of his verse, naturally appealed to one fitted, like Chaucer, through his intellectual strength, powers of imagination, and keen sense of humor, to profit by and follow an example thus set.[1]

The lesson learned from Jean de Meun was later reënforced by Chaucer's acquaintance with Italian literature. When Chaucer went to Italy in 1372, the three great forerunners of the Renaissance, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, had providentially completed their work. Dante had died fifty years before. Petrarch, the founder of modern scholarship and apostle of humanism (the study of classical literature and application of its lessons to the problems of the present), died two years later. Boccaccio, who was most to influence Chaucer, died in 1375, sixteen months after Petrarch. While Chaucer studied Dante, knew him well, and used brief passages from him, while also he paid tribute

[1] It is not possible in such an introduction as this to present this most important and interesting subject more fully. See Gaston Paris in relation to the change and advance illustrated by the difference between Guillaume de Loris and Jean de Meun, and the profound influence exerted by the latter. The most convenient, and the best, statement of the influence of the *Roman de la Rose* upon Chaucer is that by Root in his *Poetry of Chaucer*, a volume at once most helpful to the student and delightful in the reading.

to Petrarch, it was to Boccaccio, whose temperament and genius were in many ways like his own, that he owed most. Boccaccio was a student of life for artistic purposes, he presented life realistically and dramatically, and he had no didactic purpose — that is, desire to teach or preach some moral doctrine — to interfere with the full development of his artistic powers. Moreover, Boccaccio's works appealed to Chaucer as material which he could refashion into English verse for his courtly audience. Chaucer, unfortunately, did not know the *Decameron*, but he came into possession of two poems by Boccaccio in which, with fresh vividness and significance, admirable stories were told in a new way, that combined a courtly tone and atmosphere with effectively realistic incident and delineation of character. The two novels in verse which Chaucer used were notable, the one, the *Teseide*, for the interest of its incidents, from which Chaucer drew the Knight's Tale, and the other, the *Filostrato*, for its play of character, from which he made the *Troilus and Cressida*. Chaucer in his turn reworked these, as Boccaccio had reworked them from older sources, and, while he learned from Boccaccio, he surpassed him.

Through Jean de Meun and through Boccaccio, Chaucer attained to intellectual freedom and to artistic freedom — and this freedom it is that made the unfettered expression of his individuality in his work possible. Individual, original, he is, even though by far the greater part of his work is dependent upon the work of other before him. Like other medieval authors, he uses whatever he pleases, "taking his own wherever he finds it," giving credit for it or not, as he pleases. The question of his borrowings was formerly often discussed with a great deal of solemnity, but his originality is never in doubt. What he takes becomes something different, instinct with his own individuality. Lowell's phrase was that he took a pound of lead and gave back a pound of gold — a happy phrase, though it would be truer to say that he rarely took lead (he had too good an eye for that); rather he took gold, and returned it shaped into imperishable artistic form.

The old division of Chaucer's life as regards his literary activity into three periods, French, Italian, and English, is not to be recommended. In point of fact, the influence of French literature continued throughout his life, a fact obscured by such a division. So also Italian influence continued after 1372 for the rest of his life, and the so called "English period" merely means that in his last and greatest work, the *Canterbury Tales*, he came into the fullest and freest exercise of his developed artistic powers. We may now pass to a brief survey of his works before the *Canterbury Tales*, not with the expectation that in so brief a treatment we may gain a complete or in any sense adequate knowledge of their general character, or still less enter into the many interesting and difficult questions connected with them, but to learn what they are, and, what is vitally important, to understand the progress of Chaucer's literary development.

We may at once put at one side his translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* — noting the fact that he did translate it, in part at least; his translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (which, no doubt, contributed directly and materially to his intellectual freedom); his astronomical work, the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, written for his little son Louis; and one or two translations of religious works. Nor may we pause upon his shorter poems, either the love verse, serious or light, or noble ballad of *Truth*, the beautiful the *Former Age*, *Fortune*, or the *Lack of Steadfastness*, a political poem upon King Richard. The first point to be noted is that Chaucer is writing, at first, under French influence, in accordance with the current literary traditions and fashions of the courtly verse of his day. Like the French poets who are his models, he is a poet of love. This demands a word of explanation. The love of which Chaucer writes is not love precisely in the sense in which we understand it. It is the love which formed a part of the code of chivalry. According to the chivalric code of love, a knight owed allegiance to God, to his feudal lord, and if he so chose, to a lady whom he elected as his mistress, whom he adored, and whose behests he honored with loyalty and with ceremonious observance of the laws

laid down for lovers in such a case. This cult, which originated in the south of France, had developed an elaborate etiquette. It had been, and was still, taken seriously; but it had also become, so to speak, a pretty game half serious, half sentimental. There are several direct references to it in Chaucer, one is where John of Gaunt refers in the *Death of Blaunche* to his taking upon himself in his youth the profession of love, and where also mention is made of the quests upon which ladies sent their lovers; another is where the Squire, in the *Prologue*, is referred to as a "lover." (See the *Prologue*, l. 8, and note on l. 75.) In the French poets and Chaucer, however, it is not at this time the elaborate older love code that is important, but its spirit remaining behind it and coloring the verse expressing courtly gallantry. Chaucer declared himself to be, and was, a love poet. His minor poems, most of them, and every important poem up to the *Canterbury Tales*, are in some way connected with love.

In the greater number of these poems, also, he followed the prevailing fashion in the form he used. They are "visions," poems in which the poet represents himself as falling asleep and having a dream or vision which forms the subject of his poem, and in which real facts or poetic conceptions can be ideally represented disjoined from the realities and commonplace of daily life. The use of this device originated in religious literature in visions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. It appears everywhere in medieval literature — famous examples are the *Romaunt of the Rose*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the beautiful English poem of Chaucer's time, the *Pearl*.

In the *Death of Blaunche the Duchess* (1369), the poet finds himself in a great forest, where the Emperor Octavian is hunting, and there comes upon a knight in black (John of Gaunt), who tells him how evilly Fortune has dealt with him in taking from him his lady, the "good, fair White" (the Duchess Blaunche, John of Gaunt's first wife), and describes, most charmingly, her beauties of person and character. In this poem, the love vision serves in some sort as an elegy. After Chaucer's return from Italy, while

busily occupied with his duties at the customs during the day and with his studies at night, among other works (perhaps certain of the tales afterward used in the *Canterbury Tales* were composed at this time, and possibly he was translating the *Boethius*), he wrote the *House of Fame* (about 1379), which, though definitely a humorous work, full of delightful drollery and genial satire of the striving of men after fame, is, curiously enough, remotely influenced in various ways by Dante. In his vision, the poet is carried off by an eagle, sent by Jove because the poet has faithfully served his blind nephew, Cupid, and is borne into the firmament where he visits the House of Fame and the whirling wicker house to which all the rumors from earth go. That is, Chaucer is borne to the heaven where Fame dwells, just as other poets in visions had seen Purgatory or Paradise. Plainly also, though a humorous poem, this is, as Mr. Sypherd has recently made clear, a love vision, for the express errand of the eagle is to take him where, as a change from his business and his studies, he can hear tidings of love — what special tidings we shall never know, for Chaucer left the poem unfinished. Again, in the next poem, the *Parliament of Birds*, written in 1381, probably, in compliment to Queen Anne before her marriage with Richard, the poet in his vision finds himself in a garden of exquisite beauty on St. Valentine's Day, when all the birds are choosing their mates, while a council is held by the Goddess of Nature (with the various kinds of birds speaking through their representatives, sparrow hawk, cuckoo, turtledove, duck, goose, and so on), as to which of three tercel eagles (which represent Richard and two rival suitors of Anne), shall wed the fair formel eagle (Anne), standing on Nature's wrist — their final conclusion being that she shall choose for herself.

There comes a change with Chaucer's next work[1] — Chaucer's greatest work next to the *Canterbury Tales*, and in some respects

[1] The date is in dispute. It will probably be finally placed about 1382–1385 despite seemingly strong evidence, recently brought forward, for so early a date as 1377.

finer, as a work of a higher and more difficult kind. This is the *Troilus and Cressida*, the chief sources of which are the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio (with some use of his *Filocolo*) and Boccaccio's own source, Benoit de Sainte-More. Though not a vision, it is a love poem, indeed a novel in verse. The story can only be briefly outlined here. Its theme is the passion of the young and romantic Troilus for the beautiful Cressida, innocent and ingenuous in his eyes, but really shallow-hearted and wanton by nature, who forgets him when, on her return to the Grecian camp (the scene is laid before Troy) she meets the gallant and handsome Diomede. Nothing can be more commonplace than such a plot to us to-day, but any person of intelligence may be safely challenged to read the poem and not be held enthralled by it. Boccaccio certainly deserves all credit for lifting the story to the plane of true art, but Chaucer far surpasses him. He makes the story hold us through his delineation of character, not through mere interest of incident. His portrayal of the complex nature of Pandarus, the go-between who brings the lovers together, is one of the most masterly characterizations in the world's literature.

In another work, the date of which is not yet satisfactorily determined, the *Palamon and Arcite*, which later became the *Knight's Tale*, he again used Boccaccio, but with a marked difference. The poem he used, the *Teseide*, tells the story of the two knights who loved and fought for the fair Emily at great length in twelve books, with every conceivable elaboration and digression. The story was not one, as Chaucer saw, to bear such treatment as he had given the story of *Troilus and Cressida*. Here the interest of the story depends on its incidents, not on development of character, and therefore Chaucer told it with the brevity necessary to insure the quick action which such a story demands, while his *Troilus and Cressida* is much longer than its original.[1]

[1] Chaucer had used selections from the *Teseide* in former works, but the view once held that he translated it substantially complete, used parts of his translation, and then cut it down to form the *Knight's Tale*, must be given up. The more probable view seems to be that in the *Knight's Tale* we have the original *Palamon and Arcite*, with but little revision.

In his next work, the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer does not continue the new development of his dramatic genius which appears in the *Troilus and Cressida*. The poem opens with a prologue which is a love vision, for that form is essentially suited to its special purpose.[1] In this prologue Chaucer tells us how he went out in the springtime to see the daisy open against the sun and spend his hours in worship of its beauty. He falls asleep, and in his vision sees the God of Love approaching, leading the crown of womanly nobility and loyalty, Alcestis, by the hand, and behind them a great train of women who have all been loyal in love. The God of Love accuses him of having dealt disloyally in his service, through the translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, and through his portrayal of the faithless Cressida. Alcestis pleads for him, and he is enjoined, as a penance, to write legends of good, that is, true, women, who have suffered through men's faithlessness, and to give it, when finished, to the queen "at Eltham or at Sheen." Nine legends, all apparently that Chaucer wrote, follow the prologue. This work was plainly written by the command of the queen, probably as a result of the *Troilus and Cressida*, which must indeed have produced a sensation at court. It is interesting to note that Chaucer's charming description of his going out to see the daisy, often cited in illustration of his love of nature (we may be sure enough of this on other grounds), has been clearly shown by Mr. Lowes to depend upon French poems in praise of the daisy; the worship of the daisy was, it would seem, at this time a courtly cult, which may even possibly have been brought to England by the queen. It is amusing to note that Chaucer imitates the legendaries, or collection of saints' lives, common in medieval literature, in making this collection of saints in the cause of love — and the first of these saints is, *mirabile dictu*, "Cleopatra, Martyr."

[1] This Prologue exists in two versions. The reasons for the revisions in the later version are still a matter of controversy, and the question is too complex to be touched on here. But it seems certain that the second version was made at a time when Chaucer had started on the *Canterbury Tales*, and that his preoccupation with his new work prevented his completing the Legend.

We have seen that Chaucer's poems thus far all treat of love, that he was above all a love poet, that he used the current literary form, the vision, for them all save two, the *Troilus and Cressida* and the original of the *Knight's Tale*. In one of these works, the *Troilus and Cressida*, he has shown dramatic power of the highest order. In them all there has been a constant development in breadth of outlook, independence, conscious artistic power, and in the precision and beauty of his verse. We now turn to the *Canterbury Tales* and its famous *Prologue*, dating about 1387.

V. *The Canterbury Tales*

The subject of the *Canterbury Tales* is the meeting of a number of pilgrims at the Tabard Inn at Southwark, across the river from London; their agreement, at the suggestion of Harry Baily, the landlord of the Inn (the "Host"), to ride together to Canterbury, and to tell two stories each going and coming, the one who succeeds best in telling entertaining and instructive stories to receive a supper at the cost of all on their return; the incidents of the journey as affording a framework for the tales; and, of course, as the main feature, the tales themselves. The *Prologue* describes the meeting, the agreement, and the start.

The points which are of importance can be more briefly and clearly set forth in a series of questions and answers:

1. Did Chaucer base his book upon personal experience?

Upon personal experience, yes, but not on one special experience, that is, a particular pilgrimage. He may well have taken the pilgrimage to Canterbury, but not necessarily, for he had repeatedly ridden along the road on his way to Dover for the Continent when sent on diplomatic missions. Moreover, he seems to have lived for a time at Greenwich, which is on the Canterbury road. One may be sure he did not meet so representative a group of pilgrims at any single time. The artist is always wise in basing his work upon personal experience, but he is also wise in building upon, and improving, personal experience. It would be

pleasant to think that Chaucer describes a particular pilgrimage he had made, but the pilgrimage he describes is just as true and as real, and a great deal more interesting, probably, than if he described only what he saw on one particular pilgrimage.

2. What was the purpose of such pilgrimages ?

Primarily, their purpose was religious; the pilgrims went to venerate the saints whose shrines they visited and to plead for their intercession with God; or in token of gratitude, as, for example, because they believed the saint had helped them when they were sick, or, like the Knight in the *Prologue*, because of safe return from a journey; or they went simply as a devotional act which would procure them pardon for their sins. But also, as a matter of fact, going on a pilgrimage was really an excellent way of taking a pleasure trip, just as we go off for a few days to-day. One could be reasonably sure of good company, better and safer roads if one went to a famous shrine, and better lodging on the way. A number of Chaucer's pilgrims, certainly, were bent chiefly on pleasure. Pilgrimages, because of the merry-making the pilgrims indulged in, had already become a scandal to the reformers.

3. Why did the pilgrims go to Canterbury?

Because of the great fame of St. Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, champion of the cause of the Church against Henry II, which took its rise immediately after Becket's murder by emissaries of the King in 1170. Miracles began to be performed at his tomb immediately upon his death, and continued in increasing numbers, and soon his shrine became thronged with pilgrims. His memory was revered as a martyr; he was the greatest of English saints; his shrine was one of great richness and beauty through the gifts offered by persons who believed themselves benefited by him; the distance from London was of convenient length, about fifty-six miles, and could be traveled in one or more days at pleasure (three or four was the usual number); it ran through a number of interesting places, and was a better road than most; and the number of pilgrims was so great, and the

business of entertaining them so profitable, that every provision was made for their comfort and entertainment, as in our popular resorts to-day.

Pilgrimages were also constantly made to shrines outside of England, for example, to the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Galicia, to Rome, and to Jerusalem (the Wife of Bath, one of Chaucer's characters, had been twice to Jerusalem). Similar pilgrimages are made to-day, by devout Catholics, to Lourdes in France, for example, and to Rome, and Jerusalem.

4. What was the Tabard Inn from which the pilgrims started?

The chief inn of Southwark. It was convenient for people coming from a distance to stop overnight in Southwark, and pilgrims from London came over there to spend the night, get horses, and ride out in good season in the morning, in company with other pilgrims whom they had met in the inn.

5. What was the route which the pilgrims traveled?[1]

The pilgrims took the Great Dover Road, the Old Kent Road, and the New Cross Road to Deptford, then to Blackheath, then over Shooter's Hill to Welling, and on to Bexley Heath, Crayford, and so to Dartford. After the open common, Dartford Brent, at Northfleet, the route lay probably along the northern road to Greenwich, or possibly by Singlewell, and so by one way or the other to Strood. Next came Rochester, Chatham, Rainham, Newington, Dental, Schamel, and Sittingbourne, Swanstree, Bapchild, Radfield, Ospringe, Boughton under Blean, Harbledown, and at last Canterbury. The general route may readily be followed on the map. It goes through the country where Dickens lived, at Gad's Hill, which he was so fond of driving about in, and which he introduced into his novels.

We may also try to reproduce, in imagination, the country through which the pilgrims traveled. It was a fair country, this country of Kent, and fairer then than now, for it was more truly

[1] The answer to this question is taken in abstract from *Some Notes on the Road from London to Canterbury in the Middle Ages*, edited by Henry Littlehales, *Chaucer Society*, Second Series, 30.

country, more sparsely inhabited, and the houses more primitive in appearance — thatched or tiled — with narrow windows set with diamond panes, arched doorway, and a settle, perhaps, by the door, and an inclosed garden beside. The streets of the towns were narrow and rough-cobbled, without pathway on either side, and dark alleys leading from them which might harbor thieves. In the country, too, the roads were narrow, and except where the way ran along the Roman road, heavy with miry sloughs, and tufted with growing grass, as the old pictures show. Great hedges, it is likely, bordered them, except in common or forest land, but beyond these were the orchards for which Kent is to-day famous, apples and cherries — not hop gardens, as to-day, though, for hops were not cultivated in England till 1524 ("hops and heresy came together into England"). The trees other than these were the oak, birch, willow, beech, elm, mountain ash, yew, hawthorn, the dog-rose, holly, furze, ivy, peaches, pears, mulberry, fig, damson, walnut, the berry-bearing brambles, fir, poplar, plane, and box. The old churches would not look different from what they do to-day, to any great extent — but what would show least change of all in themselves, perhaps, would be the rivers, streams, and brooks. If the pilgrims went through Gravesend, they would perhaps see the Thames, as certainly at London and Rochester, and ships riding at anchor or spreading their clumsy sails — ships low-waisted with high-built bow and stern, with a taller mast about amidships, and one much lower, aft. The higher mast would bear a great sail, emblazoned, perhaps, and above that there would be a crow's nest, and above that a long, narrow, forked flag, or pennant.

The city, as they approached it, would be seen girt about with a high wall, pierced with gates, and with a ditch running along its foot. Within, the houses would be mostly one story, with the beams showing across the front, and the red-tiled roofs sloping sharply above. There would be many churches and many bells, and a jostling throng in the streets in varicolored attire. Within the inn at night there would be many of the townspeople, petty

tradesmen, and the like, gathered to gaze with curiosity at the strangers. The poorer pilgrims would sleep, perhaps in common, in low bedlike boxes on short legs, with a striped mattress rolled up at the head to form a pillow. The richer would have a half-tester bedstead, with sheets, coverlet, and pillow, and the room would be furnished with armchair, table, and bench.

Of course, one should remember the May morning, the beautiful liquid blue sky of England, the fresh sunshine, the fresh green of the trees and fields of grain, the dew lying thick and sparkling everywhere, for the pilgrims were early astir, the leisurely progress from town to town, with many a homely pleasant scene to beguile the journey — men in the forest felling the trees, with heavy boots, tight hose to the waist, tabards or loose gowns, close hoods upon their heads, or perhaps sawing the balks of timbers into lengths with saws counterpoised with weights, men shrimping along shore or drawing nets in the rivers, foresters with their bows, knights hawking by the riverside, shepherds in body gowns with the hoods over their heads, windmills turning on their hills, old wives spinning by their doors — such are some of the scenes the pilgrims saw, drawn by Mr. Littlehales from various manuscripts of Chaucer's own time.

6. How many pilgrims were there in Chaucer's company ?

Thirty-one, including Chaucer — "well nine and twenty" is his count, that is about twenty-nine. On the way the Canon's Yeoman is added to the number and tells a tale.

7. How many tales were to be told, and how many were told ?

Two each going and coming, according to Chaucer's original plan, making 124. But Chaucer later changed the number, finally, to one each, apparently, as when only a part of the pilgrims have told their tales, Canterbury is in sight. The tale of the Canon's Yeoman makes an additional tale. Chaucer has left twenty-two tales complete, with one well started (the *Squire's Tale*), and one hardly begun (the *Cook's Tale.*) It is well to remember that the work is in a very unfinished state — here unfinished in detail, there fairly complete, with abundant evidence

that what we have is still "in the rough." Like a true artist and experienced literary workman, Chaucer was working all over it at once, neglecting minor details to be attended to later, shifting material here and there, refitting old material he had by him to form a part of it, and so on. The manuscripts exhibit great confusion as regards the number and arrangement of the tales, a confusion due in part to blunders of the scribes, but also to the work's being copied at various times while it was under Chaucer's hands and being changed by him. By patient labor, however, something like the general plan and order he intended (so far as he had settled upon one) has perhaps been recovered.

The tales have been divided into nine so-called "groups," each group containing a single tale, or two or more tales which, it was assumed (not always quite satisfactorily), are so plainly linked together as to have a settled order as a group. These nine groups were then arranged in what seemed, provisionally, the most probable order, and were lettered from *A* to *I*. Other arrangements have been suggested, but that above referred to, though provisional and not final, is accepted as satisfactory for practical purposes and used in complete editions. The order is as follows: *A*. Prologue, Knight, Miller, Reeve; *B*. Man-of-Law, Shipman, Prioress, Chaucer's Sir Thopas and Melibeus, Monk, Nun's Priest; *C*. Doctor, Pardoner; *D*. Wife of Bath, Friar, Sompnour; *E*. Clerk, Merchant; *F*. Squire, Franklin; *G*. Second Nun, Canon's Yeoman; *H*. Manciple; *I*. Parson. The tales within the groups are connected by passages (called "links" by Chaucer students) describing the events of the journey, the incidents preceding the telling of the tales, and their reception when finished; between the groups there are gaps in the narrative. New numbering begins with each group. For convenience in cross reference, the tales in the present volume are numbered in accord with the complete editions.

8. Where did Chaucer get his plan of connecting stories together by having them told by a number of people?

The device was a familiar one in the Middle Ages, especially

through the various versions of the *Seven Sages*, in which a wicked empress tries to persuade her husband to make way with his son, her step-son, by telling him tales adapted to her purpose, the effect of which is offset by tales told by the boy's tutors. Chaucer, it is certain, did not get the idea from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, as so often stated, for he did not know it; had he known Boccaccio's work, he would have used it. The device came originally, in all probability, from the East. It has often been used effectively in modern literature in various forms — in English literature, by William Morris, Longfellow, Whittier, for example.

Chaucer's genius is shown in the special form of the device which he used — the meeting of a number of pilgrims and their telling their tales (as pilgrims did) on their way. By this means he could make his characters representative of all classes. Boccaccio, in the *Decameron*, makes his characters ten ladies and gentlemen (friends and all of one class) who retire to a villa near Florence to escape the plague. The interest of the *Decameron* is largely confined to the stories told; in the *Canterbury Tales* the variety of the characters, their joking and quarreling, the events that happen on the way, are of the liveliest interest.

9. Where did Chaucer get the idea of bringing together persons of every class?

This idea seems to be original with him — it probably developed from his use of pilgrims because of their habit of telling stories on the way — and his artistic use of it is the most triumphant proof of his genius. It has been questioned whether Langland's "field full of folk" in *Piers the Plowman*, in which all classes of persons appear, may not have suggested the idea to him, but this is hardly likely. In any case, the use he made of it is none the less remarkable as something wholly new in medieval literature.

10. Of what character are the tales told by Chaucer's pilgrims?

None of the tales are original in the sense that Chaucer invented them — they come from sources of various kinds, classical, Celtic, French, Oriental, near or remote. They are original because of the form he gave them, the way he tells them, his artistic skill,

the exquisite verse in which he clothes them. They are both serious and "merry," the merry tales being most of them coarse, in accordance with the character of the persons who tell them, such as the Miller, the Reeve, the Shipman. Of the others, a brief description may be given.[1]

The *Knight's Tale* (an adaptation, as we have seen, of the *Teseide* of Boccaccio, and in existence, in some form, before the *Canterbury Tales* was begun) tells how the two captive knights, Palamon and Arcite, fall in love with the lovely Emily, and how at last their rivalry was decided by a great tournament, the victor, however, losing his prize through his accidental death. The Man of Law tells the story of Constance, long and commonplace and repetitious in plot, like the romance from which it came, but full of passages of exquisite pathos in its portrayal of the virtues of Constance, constant, trustful, and loyal to her faith through her vicissitudes of fortune — she is the victim of false witness, for example, and is twice set adrift on the open sea. The *Prioress's Tale*, told with exquisite tenderness, is one of numerous legends of the murder of a Christian child by the Jews (the revolting superstition that Jews so sacrifice Christian children still lingers in parts of Europe) ; the little lad, though dead, continues to sing the praises of the Virgin — his singing has incited the Jews to slay him — till his body is discovered. Chaucer himself comes next (see the description of himself he puts into the Host's mouth in the text, page 97). His offering is a most delightful parody of the Northern romances. It is supposed, of course, to be told seriously, and Chaucer makes the joke all the better and his ridicule of the long-winded Northern romance, full of trite phrasing, all the more effective by having the Host break in when he has hardly begun, saying he can stand no more of that "drasty speech." Whereupon, in its place, Chaucer tells the moral discourse of *Melibeus*, the chief theme of which is the relation of man and wife. It is tedious to us, but to a medieval audience was full of

[1] The links cannot well be included because of the many vexed questions involved as to their authenticity, proper order, and the like.

interest, much in the same way as the repetition of well-worn arguments on simple subjects of personal interest, in our newspapers and elsewhere, are enjoyed by a host of people to-day. The Monk then relates a series of "tragedies" of famous personages fallen from their high estate and fortune, Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Barnabó Visconti, Ugolino of Pisa, and so on. Then follows one of Chaucer's masterpieces of humor, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, which tells of the pompous Chanticleer, beguiled by the fox and caught, but successful in tricking his captor and escaping. The Physician tells the well-known story of Virginia slain by her father. The Pardoner combines with a sermon a tale he uses in the discourses which advertise his pardons — a most striking story, of Eastern origin, of three roisterers who sally out from the tavern to find and slay Death. They meet an old man, shrouded all but his face, who, having long sought Death for himself, knocks as he walks with his staff on the ground to let him in. He directs them to a certain tree, where they shall find what they seek. They there find eight bushels of gold coin, and forget their quest in their joy. One is sent to procure bread and wine. The two left plot to kill the other on his return, that they may have a larger share of the gold. They slay him, and drink the wine he has brought. But while he was away he had poisoned the wine, in order to have all the treasure for himself — so all three lie dead beside the gold. Next comes the Wife of Bath. After a long prologue on virginity and marriage and her own experience in life (another of Chaucer's masterpieces, and an admirable example of Chaucer's independence and boldness, even though he uses her as mouthpiece in questioning the authority of the Church), she tells a story (Celtic in origin) of a knight who, at peril of death, must discover what women most desire, learns the answer of a hideous old woman (namely, "Mastery"), saves himself, and is afterwards forced to fulfil his promise to marry her. Won by the wisdom and admirable spirit of her explanation to him of what constitutes true gentlehood, he kisses her of his free will, whereupon she becomes a

maiden of surpassing beauty. Then the Friar and the Summoner tell tales aimed at each other; their wrath and scorn is illustrative of the bitterness of feeling between the secular clergy and the mendicant orders. The Clerk tells the tale of the patient Griselda, a girl of lowly birth, whose lovely character enables her to withstand the grievous tests to which her high-born husband subjects her. The *Squire's Tale* (unfinished, unfortunately, as it possibly was to have been more largely one of Chaucer's own invention), is of the court of the great Cambuskan (Genghis Khan), of a wonderful horse of brass that can carry one through the air where one will, a ring that enables one to understand the speech of birds, a mirror that tells the character and deeds of the person that looks into it; though barely begun, it fascinates us, and we wonder what Chaucer would have made of it. The *Franklin's Tale* is also of magic; it tells how a loyal wife mocks an unprincipled suitor by a jesting promise that she will yield to his suit if he removes the huge rocks that line the coast. He has this done by magic. Her husband, returning from a journey, is overcome by sorrow, but considers that her honor demands the fulfillment of her vow. Their loyalty and high feeling so affect the suitor that he releases her from her promise. The Second Nun tells of the virgin-martyr, Cecilia, her refusal to deny her faith, and the conversions wrought by her example. Then, as the company is riding along, they are joined by a Canon and his Yeoman, the Canon, however, taking to flight when his Yeoman, who has many grievances against him, begins to expose his swindling practices as a pretended alchemist. The Yeoman proceeds to tell how the Canon swindled one of his dupes, an amusing story, but also of interest and value as showing how clearly Chaucer saw through the pretenses of false science, though pretended alchemists could still deceive multitudes of people for centuries after him, and indeed can still find dupes to-day. And, finally, the last tale, that of the Parson, is a discourse on penitence and the seven deadly sins drawn from some version or versions of tractates by two Dominicans of the preceding century.

A brief summary like this can, naturally, give no idea of the absorbing interest of most of the tales, not only in themselves, but as affording glimpses of the life of Chaucer's time, as studied with relation to their sources and their variants before Chaucer and later, and as illustrating the wide scope of his genius.

11. Why is the *Prologue* held to be so great?

This question has already been answered in the first sections of this Introduction. It gives us a picture of a wide range of English society in Chaucer's day; the several portraits are drawn with such art that the personages depicted are types of their respective classes and yet individual and real as if actual persons; the human nature which Chaucer portrays with such humor or serious appeal is precisely the same human nature with its faults and virtues which controls people's motives and actions to-day. In a word, fundamental and universal realities of life (as in Shakespeare) are treated with the highest art; a work that does this, whatever the special forms and types that may be given them, is not conditioned by space or time in its appeal, and is assured of immortality.

12. In what way are the *Prologue* and *Tales* to be read to be fully enjoyed?

Read them with a desire to enjoy them, as one should always read — that is, with a quickened intelligence and a kindled imagination. Let Chaucer's descriptions bring his characters before you; see the people he describes. Notice how deftly and quickly he gives them actuality and life, how skillfully he selects precisely the bodily features, the features of dress, the tricks of action and speech, the habits and qualities, that count in the vivid impression with which he leaves you. Notice how his own genial personality comes out in the telling, his sympathy and tolerance; how kindly his humor is, though how unsparingly he can, by his mocking irony, lay bare hypocrisy and dishonesty. Notice how what is honest and gentle and noble touches him and how he makes you feel its worth and dignity, as in his description of the humble Parson. Notice how close together in him lay humor and tender-

ness; how, even when serious, laughter and fun sparkle up through his earnestness as if he could not help it. Try, also, to imagine what Chaucer's England was like from these pilgrims of his. History becomes a very different matter when one has some idea of what the people looked like, and how they talked and acted. Here, truly, you have them, for Chaucer's time, in their very likeness, as they lived.

As regards the *Tales* in particular, notice how, with the instinct of genius, for none of his predecessors consistently displays this apprehension of the true art of story-telling, Chaucer cuts out whatever is not essential, selecting only what is vital to the integrity and motivation of the story, and yet is careful not to cut below the quick and exclude whatever in the way of comment and illustration is necessary to give the story sufficient body and atmosphere and bring home its full significance to the hearer. If sometimes, very rarely, his comment or illustration, or an occasional digression, seem hardly vital to the modern reader, we may feel sure it had its appeal in his time. Some modern critics, curiously enough, have expressed surprise at Chaucer's inclusion of one or two tales — the *Tale of Melibeus*, for example. The real fact is that Chaucer's taste and skill are not at fault in the least — on the contrary we should use these tales, and whatever in his mode of story-telling differs from what would seem natural and to be approved to-day, to understand what he, the most modern of all medieval story-tellers, admitted to his own liking, and what, as he knew, would appeal to his hearers.

VI. *The English of Chaucer*

The fact that Chaucer's English differs from the English of to-day may, for a time, seem to interpose a barrier between the reader who has never read any Middle English and a ready understanding and appreciation of Chaucer's meaning. But any such sense of difficulty soon disappears; the difference is not sufficient to make special training necessary, so far as enjoyable reading is concerned, even though the special linguistic problems presented

by Chaucer might well occupy a man's lifetime. The only real difficulty is the obsolete words one meets with; the meaning of these must be ascertained, and it does interfere materially with reading for enjoyment to have to turn back to a glossary, or, as in the older editions, to hunt for a meaning among a number at the bottom of the page. For this reason, in the present edition, the text of the *Prologue* is provided with explanations of obsolete words and senses beside the line, so that their meaning may at once be caught by the eye. This device will make the reading of the *Prologue* for enjoyment more readily possible, and, this work once read (it is much more difficult than any other), the reader will be prepared to enter upon the other selections, not so glossed, with a sense of ease and confidence from the experience gained.

A few suggestions follow in regard to Chaucer's language. In the earliest period of English, Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, English used for the noun and adjective, pronoun and verb, more inflections than it does now; our language was then more like Latin or Greek, or as German is still. These endings were already being given up, especially in the North, before the Norman Conquest. After the Conquest, as English was spoken for a long time by uneducated persons chiefly (the upper classes speaking French), the disappearance of the endings went on more rapidly. Instead of pronouncing a final *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*, clearly, they spoke in its place an indeterminate vowel sound, something like *e* in *bitter*, such as one makes if one merely opens one's mouth and utters voice. This sound, representing older *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*, was spelled *e*. Often, also, an *n* at the end of a word, when unnecessary to convey a special meaning, was dropped; for example, *tellan*, to tell, became *tellen*, then *telle*, and finally, as to-day, *tell;* in *oxen*, where *-en* indicates the plural, it was kept. In Chaucer's time, the final *e*, which had taken the place of the older final vowels, was being dropped. In many words it might be pronounced or not, as the speaker wished, or it was even added to words which had no right to it by derivation. It is often used in verse as a syllable, and therefore the question whether or not it is to be pronounced

in a particular case is of importance. But it is not a difficult question in reading Chaucer in an edited text, for the verse itself, as will be seen later, indicates whether the *-e* is to be pronounced or not.

Such a summary of the grammar of Chaucer as is possible in an introduction is of little profit. If the subject is to be entered into at all, its treatment must be scientific and thorough. Anything less is a mere pretense. It is far more useful to indicate the more important differences between Chaucer's English and our own.

Noun. The genitive is usually *-es*. Other genitive forms (left over from the various Old English declensions) occasionally appear, for example, *helle*, *lady*, *fader*, for our *hell's*, *lady's*, *father's*. The dative, usually like the nominative, rarely has *-e*, *in honde*, *to reste*. The plural ending throughout is usually *-es* or *-s* (*lordes*, *shoos*), but the ending *-en* (*-n*), which we still have as in *oxen*, is much more frequent than now (*asshen*, ashes, *foon*, foes, *toon*, toes). A number of words (as in Old English) are the same in the plural as the singular; *deer*, *folk*, *hors*, *pound*, *sheep*, *swyn*, *thing*, *yeer*, *winter*, but some of these may take as well a plural in *-es*, *-s*.

Adjective. The weak form throughout of the adjective (one used after a pronoun, including the article), with the exception frequently of adjectives of more than one syllable, has *-e*, e.g. *the smale*, *swote*, *grene*, *gras*, *my sworne brother*. Also the vocative, *O stronge God*. Also the plural throughout of the strong adjective, *pore men*. Also adjectives used as adverbs, *brighte*, brightly. An old genitive occurs in *aller*, of all, as used in compounds.

Pronouns. *His* is used for the genitive of *it* (*its* did not come in till the sixteenth century). The nominative plural of the personal pronoun is *they*, as now, but the genitive is *here*, *hire*, *her*, *hir*, and the dative and accusative *hem*. *That* is used for the neuter of the demonstrative pronoun (definite article) *the*. Note also that pronouns used as subjects (sometimes other words) are now and then omitted, and have to be supplied, and that in Middle English there was not so much care used in making clear

to whom or to what a pronoun refers — one may find several *he*'s close together referring to different persons, or a personal pronoun may refer back a long way for its antecedent, other persons having or things having been mentioned in between.

Verbs. The verb forms will usually explain themselves, and paradigms need not be given. Verbs with stems ending in *t, d, th, s*, sometimes are contracted in the third person singular, present indicative: *bit, slit, lest, worth, rist*, for *byteth, slydeth, lesteth, wortheth, riseth*. The plural of the present indicative is *en* or *e*, *beren, tellen, bere, telle*. The plural of the preterit indicative is *e* or *en, songen, songe, speken*. The present subjunctive ends in *e*. The imperative singular has no ending or sometimes *e*; the imperative plural is usually *-eth*, but sometimes this is dropped as in Modern English. The infinitive ends in *en* or *e*. The past participle of strong verbs ends in *en* or *e*. Difficult forms of individual verbs are given in the Glossary.

A word should be added in regard to the prepositions. They have constantly in Chaucer (like other words) meanings different from their modern meanings. These variations of meaning are so numerous that they cannot be easily enumerated in the Glossary; the proper meaning usually suggests itself readily from the context.

Except for occasional constructions (very few and far between), the syntax of Chaucer is like that of Modern English. Constructions unusual to-day, when difficult, are explained in the Notes.

We pass now to a subject properly belonging under the present heading, but so important as to merit a chapter by itself.

VII. *The Pronunciation of Chaucer*

All good poetry to be truly enjoyed must be read aloud, and to read Chaucer aloud properly, and regain in some measure the movement and the melody he gave his verse, one must use some approximation to the pronunciation in use in his day. If one were to examine with the greatest care the derivation of every word and study its use in rime, an attempt to recover the proper pro-

nunciation would at best be only approximate; as it is, a very rough approximation has to answer. Rough though it may be, however, it is a vast improvement upon reading as if one were reading modern English; read that way, Chaucer's verse seems, as it seemed to Dryden in the seventeenth century, very rough and defective indeed.

Three points of general importance are these — that the final *e* is often pronounced (see later), that proper nouns often vary their accentuation, and that many words of French origin have not come to be accented on the first syllable, as was usual later if they remained in use. In these cases, as we shall see, the movement of the verse serves as a guide.

The vowels in general are pronounced like the vowels in Latin. The observance of this rule is as far as many persons go; but one may also easily observe the following simple rule, which, while not accurate, at least helps towards accuracy. When a vowel is in an open syllable, that is, when it is not followed in that syllable by a consonant (as *he-re*, *ha-re*, *hi-re*), pronounce it with its historic value as we pronounce it in reading Latin. When a vowel (except *a*) is in a closed syllable, that is, when it is followed by a consonant in that word or syllable (as *then*, *hel-pen*, *hol-pen*), pronounce it like modern "short" vowels (like *e* in *men*, *i* in *pin*, *o* in *not*.) The consonants, for the most part, may be pronounced like the consonants in Modern English.

Vowels

ă, *ā*, like *a* in *father*: *ar-me*, *cas*, *ha-te*, *gra-ce*.
ai, *ay*, like *ai* in *pail*: *pay*, *fair-e*.
au, *aw*, like *ou* in *house*: *aught*, *law-e*.
ĕ, like *e* in *bed*: *sette*.
ē (open), like *e* in *best*: *breed*, *cle-ne*.
ē (close), like *a* in *hate*: *pre-ve*, *pi-té*.
ei, *ey*, like *ei* in *veil*: *wey*, *sey-en*, *seith*.
ĭ, as in *pin*: *is*, *stil-le*.
ī, as in *police*: *lik*, *wri-te*.
ie, like *a* in *hate*: *mischief*.

ŏ, like *o* in *not*: *of*, *long*, *hop-pen*. Also, like *oo* in *good* in words which in Modern English are spelled with *o* that is pronounced like *u* in *put*: *son-ne*, *monk*.

ō (open), spelled *o* and *oo*, like the *oa* in *broad*, but without its little after-sound: *go*, *hool*, *stoon*, *ook*. Never pronounce *oo* in Chaucer like *oo* in *good*.

ō (close), as in *note*: *swo-te*, *book*, *hood*.

oi, *oy*, as in *toil*, *toy*: *floy-ten*, *boy*.

ou, *ow*, like *oo* in *tool*, rarely like *ŏ* followed by *u*: *now*, *flour*, *sough-te*; *sou-le*.

ogh, as if *ŏ* followed by *u*: *swogh*.

ough, like *ou* or like *ogh*: *bough*.

u, as in *but*: *but*, *cut*.

ŭ, *ū* (French), like French *ü*: *just*, *natŭre*.

y, like *i*.

Consonants

g, as in *got*: *gon*, *ginnen*. But in words from the French before *e*, *i*, as now, *j*: *geaunt*, *rage*.

ch, *cch*, as in *riches*: *fecchen*.

gg. usually *j*: *egge*, *juggen*. Sometimes *g*, where *g* as in *go* now appears: *dogge*, *frogge*.

gh, after a vowel, like German *ch*: *bough*, *light*.

gn, like *n*: *digne*.

kn, with *k* pronounced before the *n*: *knowe*.

ng, as in *finger*, always: *singen*.

r is trilled.

s, between vowels, is like *z*: *ese*.

s final like *s* in *this*: *is*, *was*.

VIII. *Chaucer's Versification*

Chaucer was a master in the making of verse, and we should miss a very large part of the pleasure his poetry gives, if we should neglect to learn how to read it properly with respect to the metrical laws Chaucer so scrupulously observed. We soon come to see that its beauty is due to the fact that, while possessing the widest freedom and variety within the law, it always obeys precise laws. Chaucer's precision is so great that when a line contains a license such as many another poet would readily permit himself, scholars at once question whether we have the line just as he wrote it, or

whether it may not have been miscopied or altered by the scribe, and often a comparison of the manuscripts enables them, in such cases, to recover the right reading.

In the selections in this volume, the *House of Fame* illustrates the form of verse which Chaucer used in his earlier verse, namely the four-stressed rimed couplet:

> God túrne us évery dréem to gódе!
> Fór hit is wónder, by the ródе,
> Tó my wít, what cáuseth swévenes
> Éither on mórwes, ór on évenes.

He next turned to writing five-stressed verse in stanzas, as in *Troilus and Cressida* and other lesser works. Finally, he turned, in the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Canterbury Tales*, to the form of verse which he made preëminently his own — it has since had a long and famous history in English literature — the "heroic couplet," made up of two five-stressed iambic lines coupled by rime. It will suffice for us to consider this five-stressed line, as the earlier four-stressed line offers no special difficulties of its own.

In the first place, the question of the pronunciation of the final *-e*, already referred to, becomes of importance, for on it the movement of the line constantly depends. This *-e* is sometimes pronounced and sometimes not; but, in fact, there is seldom any difficulty in telling whether or not to pronounce it, for almost always the movement of the line indicates what *-e*'s are to be pronounced and what not. These rules are to be observed — one soon applies them instinctively: —

1. The *-e* is always pronounced at the end of the line in the rime word (remember that it is pronounced nearly like *e* in *bitter*): for example, *so-te*, *hostelry-e*.

2. When there is an *-e* before the cæsura (the marked pause in the line), it is pronounced:

> Whan they were won-ne; / and in the Grete See. (59)

3. Before a vowel and before a lightly pronounced *h*, the *-e* is dropped:

> The droght(e) of Marche / hath perced to the roote. (2)
> No berd hadd(e) he, / ne never sholde have. (689)

In this line the *-e* before *he* drops, but that before *have* is kept.

To these may be added a rule in regard to unstressed *e* within a word when coming before another unstressed *e* or other unstressed vowel. In such cases it was pronounced lightly, or dropped: *ev(e)ry*, *ercedek(e)nes*. But in preterit forms of the weak verb ending in *-ede*, there was a tendency to drop the final *-e* (owing to the influence of the past participle); probably such a word as *werede* was pronounced in any of three ways, *werede*, *wer'de*, and *wered*.

These rules understood, we may next see how the line is made up. The normal line has five iambic feet, each foot containing an unstressed and a stressed syllable. For example (all the examples are taken from the *Prologue*):

Bifél that, ín that seśoun ón a dáy. (19)

Often, it should be noted, the rime word has an unaccented syllable after the stressed syllable:

And smá-le fóu-les / má-ken mé-lo-dý-e. (9)
To fér-ne hál-wes / cóuth(ę) in són-dry lón-des. (14)

Sometimes the unstressed and stressed syllable in the first foot are reversed, making the first foot a trochee. This may also take place after the cæsura; in the first example the first foot and the foot after the cæsura are both reversed:

Tróuthę and ho-nóur, / fré-dom and cúr-tei-sí-e. (46)
Justę, and eek daún-ce, / and wél pur-tréyę, and wrí-te. (96)

Sometimes the unstressed syllable of the first foot is omitted:

Ál bi-smó-tęred / wíth his há-ber-geóun. (76)

Rarely two unstressed syllables are used before the stressed syllable in a foot:

With a thréd-barę có-pe / as ís a póurę sco-lér. (260)
Is lík-ned til a físsh / *that is wá*-ter-lées. (180)

Rarely an unstressed syllable (other than the *-e*, as above,) is added before the cæsura:

In yóuthę he had-de lérn-*ed* / a góod mys-tér. (613)

In the text of the *Prologue*, the scansion of difficult lines is indicated by use of accents and by marking the silent *e*'s in irregu-

lar cases with a dot beneath, thus (ẹ). The student will soon find himself able to scan without trouble. In case of difficulty, mark the line off into feet, using for stressed syllables those syllables which would be naturally stressed in speaking, and the proper division will soon be discovered; it is often a help to mark the feet off backwards from the end of the line. The remaining texts are purposely left unmarked in order that the student may be forced to apply the rules without assistance.

IX. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, I add the tributes of three poets to Chaucer's memory.

Eleven or twelve years after Chaucer's death Hoccleve in his *Regement of Princes* wrote as follows:

"O master dear and father reverent, my master, Chaucer, flower of eloquence, pattern of profitable understanding; O universal father in knowledge, alas, that thou mightest not bequeath thine excellent wisdom on thy death-bed! What ailed Death? Alas, why should she slay thee? O Death, thou didst not harm one alone in slaying him, but all this land it hurteth; but nevertheless, yet hast thou not power his name to slay — his high virtue escapeth unslain from thee, which ever hearteneth us in stirring wise with books of his fair inditing, wherewith all this land is illuminated. . . . Alas, my worthy and honorable master, this land's very treasure and riches, Death, by thy death, hath done unto us harm irreparable; her revengeful violence hath despoiled this land of the sweetness of rhetoric, for unto Tully was never man so like among us . . . . She might have tarried her vengeance a while, till that some man had been born equal to thee. Nay, let be! she knew well that this isle may never bring forth man like to thee, and she must needs fulfill her office. God bade her do so, I trust as for the best. O master, master, God rest thy soul!"

And in the seventeenth century Dryden wrote:

"With Ovid ended the golden age of the Roman tongue; from Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. . . . Both writ

with wonderful facility and clearness. . . . Both of them understood the manners, under which name I comprehend the passions, and in a larger sense the descriptions, of persons and their very habits. For an example, I see Baucis and Philemon so perfectly before me as if some ancient painter had drawn them; and all the Pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, their humors, their features, and their very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard in Southwark. Yet even then the figures of Chaucer are much more lively and set in a better light. . . . As he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense, learned in all the sciences, and therefore speaks properly on all subjects. . . . Chaucer followed Nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her. . . . He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature because it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single characteristic escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other and not only in their inclinations but in their very physiognomies and persons. . . . The matter and manner of their tales and of their telling are so suited to their different educations, humors, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distingushed by their several sorts of gravity — their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling and their breeding; such as are becoming of them and of them only. . . . But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*."

Hearty, outspoken words not wholly in accord in all points with the results of modern criticism, perhaps, but what fine, whole-souled, generous appreciation they speak! Finally, we turn to the opening words of an essay upon Chaucer by a true poet, and at the same time a great critic, James Russell Lowell:

"Can any one hope to say anything, not new, but even fresh, on a topic so well worn? It may well be doubted; and yet one is always the better for a walk in the morning air, — a medicine which may be taken over and over again without any sense of sameness, or any failure of its invigorating quality. There is a pervading wholesomeness in the writings of this man, — a vernal property that soothes and refreshes in a way of which no other has ever found the secret. I repeat to myself a thousand times: —

'Whan that Aprilë with his showrës sotë
The droughte of Marche hath percëd to the rotë,
And bathëd every veine in swich licour
Of which virtue engendered is the flour, —
When Zephyrus eek with his swetë breth
Enspirëd hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppës, and the yongë sonne
Hath in the ram his halfë cors yronne,
And smalë foules maken melodië,' —

and still at the thousandth time a breath of uncontaminate spring-tide seems to lift the hair upon my forehead."

CHAUCER

CHAUCER

THE PROLOGUE

[A. 1–858]

Here Bygynneth the Book of the Tales of Canterbury

WHÁN that Aprille with his shoures soote — showers sweet
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote, — drought, pierced, root
And bathed every veyne in swich licour — such a liquor
Of which vertu engendred is the flour; — that of its, created
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth — also
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth — breathed into, wood, heath
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne — shoots, sun
Háth in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye, — birds
That slepen al the nyght with open ye — — eye
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages — — spurs (stirs), heart (inner being)
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrymages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, — strands
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes; — far hallows (saints), known
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende, — take their way
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke. — helped, sick

Bifel that, in that sesoun on a day
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay — stopped
Rédy to wenden on my pilgrymage — go
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage, — heart (spirit, disposition)
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye

Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle — chance, fallen
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle
Thát toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde, — large
And wel we weren esed atte beste. — cared for (entertained), in best wise
And, shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, — at rest
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon — each one
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon, — forthwith
And made forward erly for to ryse, — agreement (promise)
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse. — where I shall tell you
But natheles, whýl I have tyme and space, — nevertheless, as (seeing that)
Ér that I ferther in this tale pace, — pass
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun — it seems to me reasonable
To telle yow ál the condicioun — condition in life
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whichę they were, and of what degree, — of what sort, rank of life
And eek in what array that they were inne; — dress
Ánd at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.
A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
Thát, fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrye, — to travel abroad
Troúthe and honour, frédom and curteisie. — generosity, courtesy
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre, — distinguished in prowess, wars
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre, — farther
As wel in cristendom as hethenesse, — Christian as in heathen lands
And ever honoured for his worthynesse. — knightly qualities
At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne — headed the table
Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce. — nations, Prussia
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce, — Lithuania, made war, Russia
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be — Granada
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye. — Algeciras, Benamarin

At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye, Ayas (once Layas), Adalia
Whán they were wonne; and in the Grete See Mediterranean
At many a noble armee hadde he be. expedition by sea
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene, in deadly
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene Tremessen
In listes thryes, and ay slayn his foo. lists (set combat), always
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also same
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye Palathia
Agayn another hethen in Turkye, — heathen foe
And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys, ever since, fame
And though that he were worthy, he was wys, renowned, sensible
Ánd of his port as meek as is a mayde. behavior
He nevere yet no vileinye ne sayde unworthy thing
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight. sort of person
He was a verray parfit gentil knyght. truly perfect noble
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors were goode, but he was nat gay. horses, finely dressed
Of fustian he wered a gypon fustian, close vest
Ál bismotered with his harbergeon, soiled, coat of mail
For he was late ycome from his viage, journey
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage. make

With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,
A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler, gay-hearted bachelor
With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse, curled, had been
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe, in, proper height
And wonderly delivere, and greet of strengthe, quick of movement
And he hadde been somtyme in chivachye on military expeditions
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye, Flanders, Artois, Picardy
And born hym wel, as of so litel space, allowing for so short a time
In hope to stonden in his lady grace. stand in his lady's favor
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede embroidered, meadow
Al ful of fresshe floures white and reede;

Sýngyng he was, or floytynge, al the day; fluting
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Shórt was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ride, admirably
He coude songes make, and wel endite, compose verse
Júste, and eek daunce, and wel purtreye, and write. joust, draw
So hoote he lovede, that by nyghtertale fervently, night-time
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteys he was, lowely, and servysable, courteous, modest, dutiful
And carf biforn his fader at the table. carved, before
A YEMAN hadde he, and servants namo yeoman, no more
At that tymę, fór hym liste ride so; it pleased him to ride
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
A sheef of pecok arwes brighte and kene feathered with peacock feathers
Únder his belt he bar ful thriftily; carefully
Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly, tackle, like a good yeoman
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe; drooped
And in his hand he bar a myghty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he, with a broun visage. nut head (round like a nut)
Of woode-craft wel coude he all thę usage. knew, practice
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer; bracer (arm-guard)
And by his syde a swerd and a bokęler, buckler (small round shield)
And on that oother syde a gay daggere, fine
Hárneised wel, and sharp as poynt of spere; appointed
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene; St. Christopher, bright
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene — baldric (shoulder strap)
A forster was he soothly, as I gesse. forester, truly
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE, Prioress
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy; modest and quiet
Hir gretteste ooth was but by seynte Loy; St. Eligius
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne. called
Ful wel she song the sérvicé divyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely; intoned (see note), properly

And Frensh she spak full faire and fetisly, elegantly
Áfter the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe, school
For Frensh of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel ytaught was she withalle; well brought up
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe lift to her mouth, take heed
Thát no drope ne fille upon hir brest.
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest; much, pleasure
Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene,
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene cup, particle
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte; grease
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte, reached
And sikerly she was of greet disport, surely, lively of spirit
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port, in manner of address
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere took pains, the ways
Of court, and been estatlich of manere, to be stately in manner
And to ben holden digne of reverence. worthy
But, for to speken of hir conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous, compassionate
She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
Caúght in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed; the best bread
But sore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte — stick, smartly (hard)
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hir wympel pinched was; wimple, plaited
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas, well-formed, eyes
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed,
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe; believe ("should say")
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe. certainly, short in stature

Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war. finely made
Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene; with its gauds (larger beads) all of green
And theron heng a brooche of gold ful shene,
On which ther was first writẹn a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Another NONNE with hir hadde she,
That was hir chapeleyne, and PREESTES thre. chaplain
A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie, a fair one exceedingly
An outridere, that lovẹde venerye; outrider, the art of hunting
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable, choice
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel here
Gýnglen in a whistlyngẹ wynd, als clere, jingle
And eek as loude, as doth the chapel belle,
Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle. where, cell
The reule of seynt Maure or of seynt Beneit, rule, Mawre, Benedict
By-cause that it was old and som del streit, strict
This ilke monk leet olde thynges pace, same, let [these], go
And held áfter the newe world the space. according to the new state of things his course
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen, gave (cared), plucked
That seith, that hunters ben nat hooly men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheless, heedless (of rule)
Is likned til a fissh that is wáterlees; to
This is to seyn, a monk oút of his cloistre. cloister
But thilke text held he nat worth an oystre, that same
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie, and make hymselven wood, why, mad
Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure, pore
Or swynken with his handes and laboure, toil
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served? St. Augustine bids, cared for
Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved.
Therfor he was a pricasour aright; hard rider for sure

Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight.
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond — saw, bordered
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond; — gray fur, in the land
And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn,
A love-knot in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled that shoon as any glas, — bald
And eek his face as he hadde been anoynt. — anointed
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt; — in good condition
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed — bright
That stemed as a forneys of a leed; — shone, grate, caldron
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat — — in fine condition
Now certeynly he was a fair prelat. — prelate
He was nat pale as a for-pyned goost; — ghost wasted by torment
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye. — horse
A FRERE ther was, a wantown and a merye, — Friar, sportive
A lymytour, a ful solempne man. — limitor, cheerful
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can — knows
So moche of daliaunce and fair langage. — gossip, flattering speech
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post. — pillar
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he — at home
With frankeleyns over al in his contree, — franklins, everywhere
And with worthy wommen of the toun; — respected (for rank or wealth)
For he hadde power of confessioun, — the power to hear confessions
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat, — curate (one in charge of a parish)
For of his ordre he was licentiat. — a licentiate
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun;

He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce; expected to be given
For unto a povre ordre for to yive mendicant order, give
Is signe that a man is wel yshrive; shriven
Fór, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt, gave, durst, confident statement
He wiste that a man was repentaunt; knew
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may nat wepe al thogh hym soore smerte; it smart him
Therfore, in stede of wepynge and preyeres,
Men moote yeve silver to the poure freres. ought to give
His tipet was ay farsed ful of knyves tippet (cape), always stuffed
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note;
Wel coude he synge and pleyen on a rote. rote
Of yeddynges he bar outrely the pris. songs, carried away, prize
His nekke whit was as the flour de lys. fleur-de-lys
Therto he strong was as a champioun. champion (see note)
He knew the taverneṣ wel in every toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere hostler, tapster
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere; better, leper, beggar
For unto swich a worthy man as he for, in the case of
Acorded nat, as by his facultee, it was not fitting, (considering his endowments)
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce. such
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce creditable, prove helpful
Fór to deelen with no swich poraille, deal, poor folk (paupers)
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille; provisions
And over al, ther as profit sholde aryse, everywhere, where
Curteis he was, and lowely of servyse. humble in giving
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous; capable
He was the beste beggere in his hous,
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho, widow, shoe
So plesaunt was his "*In principio*,"
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente;

His purchas was wel bettre than his rente. — odd pickings, stated income
And rage he coude as it were right a whelpe. — play, as if he were a puppy
In love-dayes ther coude he muchel helpe, — love-days
For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer, — dweller in a cloister
With a thrédbarę cope, as is a poure scoler, — cope
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semycope, — half cape
That rounded as a belle out of the presse. — stood out round like, mold
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantounesse, — lisped, out of affectation
To make his Englissh swetė upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whán that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aright,
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.
A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat, — motley (cloth of mixed color)
Upon his heed a Flaundrish bever hat; — Flemish
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly. — stylishly
His resons he spak ful solempnely, — reasons (conclusions), pompously
Sownynge alway thę encrees of his wynnyng. — so as to tend alway to
He wolde the see were kept for any thing — kept free of piracy at any cost
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel coude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle. — exchange crowns (money) at a good rate
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette; — applied
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estátly was he of his governaunce, — dignified, demeanor (self-control)
With his bargaynes and with his chevisaunce. — in connection with, money dealings
Forsothe he was a worthy man with alle, — truly
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle. — know not
A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also, — Oxford
That unto logik hadde longe ygo. — gone (devoted himself)
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake, — was not, engage to say (affirm)

But loked holwe, and therto soberly. hollow, melancholy
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy, outside short cloak
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office. as to hold an office
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed more preferable to
Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye. fiddle, psaltery
But al be that he was a philosophre, although he
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente, get
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye. study
Of studie took he most cure and most hede. care
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede, one
And that was seyd in forme and reverence, in due form and with deference
And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence. acute, lofty meaning
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche, conducive to
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.
A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys, discreet
That often hadde been at the Parvys, Parvis
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence — reputation demanding respect
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise justice (acting judge), county sessions
By patente and by pleyn commissioun, full
For his science, and for his heigh renoun. knowledge
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon. a one
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon; conveyancer
Al was fee symple to hym in effecte, no more difficult than a fee simple
His purchasynge myghte nat been infecte. conveyancing, made invalid
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,

And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle, — at his command, cases, decisions
That from the tyme of kyng William were falle. — had befallen
Therto he coude endite, and make a thyng, — compose, draw up a document
Ther coude no wight pynche at his writyng; — take exception to
And every statut coulde he pleyn by rote. — knew, in full
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote — without show, of mixed cloth
Gírt with a ceynt of silk, with barres smale; — girdle, bars
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.
A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye. — Franklin
Whyt was his berd as is the dayesye.
Óf his complexioun he was sangwyn. — sanguine
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn. — morning, sop of bread
To liven in delit was ever his wone, — enjoyment, wont
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delyt — complete
Was verraily felicitee parfit. — perfect
An householdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian he was in his contree. — country-side
His breed, his ale, was alwey after oon; — of one kind (of the best)
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon. — with a better stock of time
Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous, — plenteous
It snewed in his house of mete and drynke, — snowed
Of alle deyntees that men coude thynke.
Áfter the sondry sesons of the yeer,
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe, — coop
And many a breem and many a luce in stewe. — bream, luce (pike), pond
Wo was his cook, but if his sauce were — an evil day was it for, unless
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his gere. — poignant, utensils ("things")
His table dormant in his halle alway — side table
Stood redy covered al the longe day.

At sessiouns ther was he "lord" and "sire";
Ful ofte tyme he was Knyght of the Shire.
An anlas, and a gipser al of silk, dagger, purse
Héng at his girdle, whyt as morne milk, morning
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour; sheriff, auditor (?)
Was nowher such a worthy vavasour. vavasour
An HABBERDASSHER and a CARPENTER, Haberdasher
A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER — Weaver, Upholsterer
And they were clothed alle in o liveree
Of a solempne and greet fraternitee. famous and
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apyked was; dress, furbished up
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras, mounted
But al with silver wroght ful clene and weel,
Hir girdles and hir pouches everydeel. every bit
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys, burgess
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys. gildhall, daïs
Everich, for the wisdom that he can, knew
Was shaply for to been an alderman. fit
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente, property, income
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn were they to blame—
It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"
And goon to vigilies al bifore, vigils
And have a mantel roialliche ybore. carried
A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones, for the occasion
To boille the chiknes with the marybones, marrow-bones
And poudre marchant tart, and galyngale. powder marchant, galingale
Wel coude he knowe a draughte of London ale. tell . . . London (from other) ale
He coude roste, and sethe, and broill, and frye,
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye, thick soups
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he; running sore
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste. blanc mange

A SHIPMAN was ther, wonynge fer by weste : dwelling
For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe. know, Dartmouth
He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe, hired nag, as well as he could
Ín a gowne of faldyng to the knee. coarse cloth
A daggere hangyng on a laas hadde he lace
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And, certeynly, he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe drawn
From Burdeuxward, whyl that the chapman sleep. Bordeaux, merchant (or supercargo)
Of nyce conscience took he no keep. a scrupulous, heed
If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond, fought, upper hand
By water sente hem hoom to every lond.
Bút of his craft to rekene wel his tydes, in his trade
His stremes and his daungers hym bisides, currents, dangerous places, close at hand
His herberwe and his moone, his lodemenage, harborage, (changes of the) moon, pilotage
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage. Carthage
Hárdy he was, and wys to undertake; bold, in managing
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew wel alle the havenes, as they were,
From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere, Gottland (in the Baltic), Finisterre
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne. creek
His barge ycleped was the Maudelayne. ship

With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK,
In al this world ne was ther noon hym lyk
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye;
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel See note on ll. 411–444
In houres, by his magik naturel;
Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
Óf his images for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,

Were it of hoot, or cold, or moiste, or drye, — See note
And where engendred, and of what humour.
He was a verrey parfit practisour. — practitioner
The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the seke man his boote. — remedy
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries,
To sende hym drogges, and his letuaries, — electuaries
For ech of hem made other for to wynne; — make money
Hir frendschipe nas nat newe to bigynne. — Their
Wel knewe he the olde Esculapius, — Esculapius
And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus, — Descorides
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen, — Hippocrates, Galen
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen, — Rhasis, Avicen
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn, — Averroes, Damascenus, Constantinus
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn. — Bernardus, Gatesden, Gilbertus Anglicus (?)
Of his diete mesurable was he, — moderate
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al, — red (stuff), blue (stuff)
Lyned with taffata and with sendal; — taffeta, sendal (silk)
And yet he was but esy of dispence, — sparing in expenditure
He kepte that he wan in pestilence; — the plague
For gold in phisik is a cordial, — is (used as) a cordial
Therfor he lovede gold in special. — especially

A good Wyf was ther of biside Bathe,
But she was som del deef, and that was scathe. — somewhat, misfortune ("a pity")
Of cloothmakyng she hadde swich an haunt, — skill
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt. — surpassed, Ypres, Ghent
In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
That to the offryinge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she, — wroth

That she was out of alle charitee. love and charity (towards her fellows)
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground, kerchiefs, texture
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound,
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe. tightly, pliable (not dry and hard)
Bóold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,
Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe
(But therof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe). just now
And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, Boulogne
In Galice at Seynt Jame, and at Coloigne; Galicia, Cologne
She coude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye. she had teeth wide apart
Upon an amblere esily she sat, ambling horse
Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat covered with a wimple
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe; buckler, target (shield)
A foot mantel aboute hir hipes large, foot-cloak (serving as a habit)
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweship wel coude she laughe and carpe. good company, talk
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she coude of that art the olde daunce. the old game
A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre PERSOUN of a toun; Parson
But riche he was of holy thoght and werk;
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche. parishioners
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent, wondrous

And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes. proved, times
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes, unwilling was he, use excommunication
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute
Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce; offerings, property
He coude in litel thyng have suffisaunce. find a sufficiency
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder, ceased not
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite misfortune
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite, farthest, high and low
Upon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf, example
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte. practiced, preached
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte, those, took
And this figure he added eek therto, figure of speech
That "if gold ruste, what shal yren do?"
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste; is it if an ignorant man rust
And shame it is, if a preest take keep, take heed
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep. defiled
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive
By his clennesse how that his sheep shold live.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre,
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre, left
And ran to London, unto Seinte Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules, chantry
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde; brotherhood, maintained
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde.
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie. hireling
And though he hooly were and vertuous,
He was to synful man nat despitous, unmerciful

Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne, forbidding, condescending
Bút in his techyng discreet and benygne;
To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse;
Bút it were any persone obstynat, except
Whát so he were, of heigh or lowe estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys. reprove, for the time
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He wayted after no pompe and reverence, looked for, special honor
Ne maked him a spiced conscience, the pretense of a scrupulous
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselve.
With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother. carted, load
A trewe swynkere and a good was he, toiler
Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At alle tymes, thogh hym gamed or smerte, though things went well or hard
And thanne his neighebour right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve, ditch, dig
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hyre, if it lay in his myght.
His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,
Bóthe of his propre swynk and his catel. own labor, property
Ín a tabard he rood upon a mere. frock
Ther was also a REVE and a MILLERE, Reeve
A SOMNOUR and a PARDONER also, Summoner, Pardoner
A MAUNCIPLE, and myself; there were namo. Manciple, no more
The MILLER was a stout carl, for the nones, fellow, to be sure
Ful big he was of braun and eek of bones; brawn (muscle)
That proved wel, for overal ther he cam, proved itself true
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram. ram (as a prize)
Hé was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre, thickly knotted chap

Ther nas no dore that he noolde heve of harre, heave from its hinges
Or breke it at a rennying with his heed. by running at it
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade top
A werte, and theron stood a tuft of herys,
Reéd as the bristles of a sowes eres.
His nosethirles blake were and wide. nostrils, black
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;
Hé was a janglere and a goliardeys, loud talker, teller of loose stories
And that was most of synne and harlotryes. evil ways
Wel coude he stelen corn and tollen thryes, take toll
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee. See note
A whyt cote and a blew hood wered he. wore
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and sowne, sound
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.
A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple, Manciple, temple (inn of court)
Of which achatours myghte take exemple purchasers
Fór to be wise in bying of vitaille.
For, whether that he payde or took by taille, by tally (on credit)
Algate he wayted so in his achaat, watched, buying
That he was ay biforn and in good staat. ahead
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace ignorant, surpass
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men!
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of whiche ther were a doseyn in that hous,
Wórthy to been stywardes of rente and lond income
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make hym lyve by his propre good, upon his own fortune
In honour dettelees, but he were wood, without debt, mad

Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire; economically
And able for to helpen al a shire a whole
In any cas that myghte falle or happe;
And yit this Maunciple sette hir aller cappe. made fools of them all
The Reve was a sclendre, colerik man, Reeve (steward), irritable
His berd was shave as ny as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres round yshorn.
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene
Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.
Wel coude he kepe a gerner and a bynne; granary
Ther was noon auditour coude on hym wynne. auditor
Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn
The yeldyng of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayeyre, cattle
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye, horses, stock
Was hoolly in this reves governynge,
And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge, (he) gave
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.
Ther coude no man brynge him in arrerage. prove him in arrears
Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne oother hyne, herdsman, farm laborer
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne; deceit
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth, dwelling
With grene trees shadwed was his place.
He coude bettre than his lord purchace. buy
Ful riche he was astored prively, richly, provided with stores
His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly, craftily
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good, lend, property
And have a thank and yet a cote and hood. also (a gift of)
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster; trade
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot, cob (horse)

That was al pomely grey and highte Scot. dappled
A long surcote of pers upon he hade, over-garment, blue (cloth)
And by his syde he bar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this Reve, of which I telle, Norfolk
Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle. Bawdeswell
Túkked he was, as is a frere, aboute His coat was tucked up like a friar's
And ever he rood the hyndreste of oure route. last, company
A Somnour was ther with us in that place, Summoner
That hadde a fir-reed cherubynnes face, cherub's
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe. pimply red with salt phlegm
As hot he was, and lecherous as a sparwe, amorous
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd; scabby, thin
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyksilver, lytarge, ne brimstoon, litharge
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of Tartre noon, borax, ceruse, cream of tartar
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white, blotches
Nór of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree; document
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Can clepen "Watte" as well as can the pope. Watt (nickname for Walter)
But whoso coude in oother thyng hym grope, test
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie; philosophy (knowledge)
Ay "*Questio, quid iuris?*" wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde. fellow

He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn — permit
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelfmonth, and excuse hym atte fulle; — to the full
And prively a fynch eek couth he pulle. — pluck a finch (swindle a dupe)
And if he fond oowher a good felawe, — anywhere
He wolde techen him to have noon awe
In swich cas of the ercedekenes curs, — archdeacon's excommunication
But if a mannes soule were in his purs —
Fór in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be;
"Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;
Of cursying oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith, — a curse will slay, absolution
And also war hym of a *Significavit*. — beware
In daunger hadde he at his owene gyse — his control, by means of his own
The yonge girles of the diocise, — young people, diocese
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed. — adviser of them all
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed, — garland
As greet as it were for an ale-stake; — See note
A bokęler hadde he maad hym of a cake.
With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER,
Of Rouncivale, his frend and his compeer, — close comrade
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Full loude he song, "Com hider, love, to me."
This somnour bar to hym a stif burdoun, — burden (bass)
Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.
This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex, — wax
But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flex; — hank of flax
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde, — in bunches
And therewith he his shuldres overspradde;
But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon; — in separate portions one by one
But hood, for jolitee, ne wéred he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walet. — wallet

Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet; in the new fashion
Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare. with hair loose
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare. shiny (staring)
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe; vernicle
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot. brimfull
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late yshave;
I trow he were a geldyng or a mare.
Bút of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer, bag, pillow case
Which that he seyde was Our Lady veyl:
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl piece
Thát Seynt Peter hadde whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente. took
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones, laton (an alloy of copper and zinc)
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond relics
A poure person dwellyng upon lond, in the country
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye. parson
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes, jokes
He made the person and the peple his apes. "made monkeys of"
But trewely to tellen, atte laste, after all
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste; ecclesiastic
Wel coude he rede a lessoun or a storie, legend (saint's life)
But alderbest he song an offertorie, best of all, offertory
For wel he wiste, when that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge polish
To wynne silver, as he ful wel coude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude. so merrily

Now have I told you shortly, in a clause, — in a sentence
Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eke the cause — the estate, the array
Whý that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,
That hightę the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
Hów that we baren us that ilke nyght, — conducted ourselves
Whán we were in that hostelrye alyght, — had alighted
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And al the remenaunt of our pilgrymage.
But first I pray yow of your curteisye,
That ye narette it nat my vileinye, — ascribe, to lack of breeding on my part
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir chere; — behavior
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely. — precisely
For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
Whó-so shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he can
Évęrich a word, if it be in his charge, — every
Al speke he nevęr so rudeliche and large; — although, roughly, fully
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe, — in an untrue fashion
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe. — make up a thing, different
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in Holy Writ, — broadly
And wel ye woot, no vileinye is it. — evil
Eėk Plato seith, whoso can hym rede,
"The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."
Also I pray yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree — although, in order of rank
Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chere made our Hooste us evęrichon,

And to the soper sette he us anon;
And served us with vitaille at the beste.
Stróng was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste. it pleased us
A semely man our HOOSTE was withalle
Fór to have been a marchal in an halle; marshal
A large man he was with eyen stepe, bright
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe: Cheapside
Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,
Ánd of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a myrie man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan, to make sport
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges, entertainment
Whán that we hadde maad our rekenynges; paid our bills
And seyde thus, "Now, lordynges, trewely
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely:
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh noght this yeer so myrie a compaignye
At ones in this herberwe as is now. at one time
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how give you pleasure, if I knew how
Ánd of a myrthe I am right now bithoght, amusement, have bethought me
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
Ye goon to Caunterbury — God yow spede,
The blisful martir quite yow your medé. requite, meed
And, wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye; intend, tell stories, have sport
For, trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfor wol I maken yow disport, sport
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort. cause
And if yow lyketh alle, by oon assent, it likes you
Nów for to stonden at my jugement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye,

Nów, by my fader soule that is deed,
Bút ye be merye, I wol yeve yow myn heed.
Hóld up your hond, withouten more speche."
Our counseil was nat longe for to seche; seek
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys, a matter for thought
And graunted hym withouten more avys, assented, deliberation
And bad hym seye his verdit as hym leste. verdict
"Lórdynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But tak it not, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
Thís is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye shorten thereby
Ín this viage, shal telle tales tweye, journey, two
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this cas
Táles of best sentence and most solas, that are most instructive and amusing
Shall have a soper at our aller cost of us all
Hére in this place, sittynge by this post,
Whán that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven gladly with yow ride,
Ríght at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde.
And who-so wol my jugement withseye decision, gainsay
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Tél me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore." prepare myself
This thyng was graunted, and our othes swore sworn
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also (we) prayed
That he wold vouchesauf for do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,

Ánd of oure tales juge and reportour, reporter
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,
And we wol reuled been at his devys, by his direction
In heigh and lough; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his jugement, have agreed with, plan
And therupon the wyn was fet anoon, fetched
We dronken, and to reste wente echoon,
Withouten any lenger taryinge.
A-morwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge, on the morrow
Up roos oure Hoost, and was our aller cok, cock for us all
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,
And forth we riden, a litel moore than pas, a walk
Únto the wateryng of seynt Thomas. watering-place
And there our Hoost bigan his hors areste, to stop
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.
Ye woot youre forward, and it yow recorde. promise, remind
If even-song and morwe-song accorde, agree
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my jugement
Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne. lots, farther go
Hé which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne."
"Sir Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord. agreement
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioresse;
And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse, give up, shyness
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man." to it
Anon to drawen every wight began,
And, shortly for to tellen as it was,
Wére it by aventure or sort or cas, fortune, destiny, chance
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght, truth
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght; one

And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun, right
By forward and by composicioun, promise, agreement
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his free assent,
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
And with that word we riden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a myrie chere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

Heere endith the prolog of this book; and heere bigynneth the first tale which is the Knyghtes Tale.

THE KNIGHTES TALE

[A. 859–3108]

Iamque domos patrias, Scithice post aspera gentis
Prelia, laurigero, etc.

Part I

Whylom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne;
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne.
What with his wisdom and his chivalrye
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whylom was ycleped Scithia;
And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hir hoom with him in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnitee,
And eek hir faire suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duk to Athenes ryde,
And al his hoost in armes him bisyde.
And certes, if it nere to long to here,
I wolde han told yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus and by his chivalrye,
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen Athenes and Amazones,
And how asseged was Ypolita,

The faire, hardy queene of Scithia,
And of the feste that was at hir weddinge,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-cominge;
But al that thing I moot as now forbere.
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough.
The remenant of the tale is long ynough;
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat see now who shall the soper winne —
And ther I lefte, I wol ageyn biginne.

This duk, of whom I make mencioun,
When he was come almost unto the toun
In al his wele and in his moste pryde,
He was war, as he caste his eye asyde,
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye
A companye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after other, clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,
That in the world nys creature livinge,
That herde swich another weymentinge;
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,
Till they the reynes of his brydel henten.
"What folk ben ye, that at myn hom-cominge
Perturben so my feste with cryinge?"
Quod Theseus, "Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow misboden, or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended;
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"
The eldest lady of hem alle spak,
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly chere

That it was routhe for to seen and here,
And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to liven,
Noght greveth us your glorie and your honour;
But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on our wo and our distresse;
Some drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentillesse,
Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle.
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a quene;
Now be we caitifs, as it is wel sene,
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,
That noon estat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden your presence,
Here in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han been waitinge all this fourtenight;
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy might.
"I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,
Was whylom wyf to king Capaneus,
That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day!
And alle we, that been in this array,
And maken al this lamentacioun,
We losten alle our housbondes at that toun,
Whyl that the seege theraboute lay.
And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,
He, for despyt and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileinye
Of alle our lordes, whiche that ben slawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
Neither to been yburied nor ybrent,

But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."
And with that word, withouten more respit,
They fillen gruf, and cryden pitously,
"Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
And lat our sorwe sinken in thyn herte."
This gentil duk doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so mat
That whylom weren of so greet estat.
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde doon so ferforthly his might
Upon the tyraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That al the peple of Grece sholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anoon, withouten more abood,
His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebes-ward, and al his host bisyde;
No neer Athenes wolde he go ne ryde,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his way that nyght he lay,
And sente anoon Ypolita the quene,
And Emelye, hir yonge suster shene,
Unto the toun of Athenes to dwelle,
And forth he rit; ther nis namore to telle.
The rede statue of Mars with spere and targe
So shyneth in his whyte larger bane,
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and doun;
And by his baner born is his penoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete

The Minotaur, which that he slough in Crete.
Thus rit this duk, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his host of chivalrye the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte fighte.
But shortly for to speken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
He faught, and slough him manly as a knight
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flight,
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wal and sparre and rafter,
And to the ladyes he restored agayn
The bones of hir housbondes that were slayn,
To doon obsequies, as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to long for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentinge
That the ladyes made at the brenninge
Of the bodyes, and the grete honour
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
Doth to the ladyes, whan they from him wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,
Stille in that feeld he took al night his reste,
And dide with al the contree as him leste.

To ransake in the tas of bodyes dede,
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisinesse and cure,
After the bataille and disconfiture.
And so bifel that in the tas they founde,
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous, blody wounde,
Two yonge knightes ligging by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely;

Of whiche two Arcita hight that oon,
And that other knight hight Palamon.
Nat fully quike, ne fully dede they were,
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere,
The heraudes knewe hem best in special,
As they that weren of the blood royal
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the tas the pilours han hem torn,
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and ful sone he hem sente
To Athenes, to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.
And whan this worthy duk hath thus ydon,
He took his host and hoom he rood anon
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
And there he liveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyf; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwish and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite,
For evermore, ther may no gold hem quite.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Til it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe —
For with the rose colour strof hir hewe,
I noot which was the fairer of hem two —
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
She was arisen and al redy dight;
For May wol have no slogardye anight;
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte,
And seith, "Arys, and do thyn observaunce."

This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse;
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Bihinde hir bak a yerde long, I gesse.
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and doun, and, as hir liste,
She gadereth floures, party whyte and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,
And as an aungel hevenisshly she song.

The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
Ther as the knightes weren in prisoun,
Of which I tolde yow, and tellen shal,
Was evene joynant to the gardyn-wal,
Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyinge.
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morweninge,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh,
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
Was in hir walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
Goth in the chambre roming to and fro,
And to himself compleyning of his wo;
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "Alas!"
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a window, thikke of many a barre
Of iren, greet and square as any sparre,
He caste his eye upon Emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte, and cryde "A!"

As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry Arcite anon up-sterte,
And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
Our prisoun, for it may non other be;
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the heven whan that we were born;
We moste endure — this is the short and playn."
This Palamon answerde, and seyde agayn,
"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thou hast a veyn ymaginacioun;
This prison caused me nat for to crye,
But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady, that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,
Is cause of al my crying and my wo.
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But Venus is it, sothly, as I gesse."
And therwithal on knees doun he fil,
And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure
Bifore me, sorweful wrecche creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.
And if so be my destynee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of our lynage have som compassioun,
That is so lowe ybroght by tirannye."

And with that word Arcite gan esype
Wheras this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,
"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hir that rometh in the yonder place;
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
That I may seen hir atte leste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nis namore to seye."
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he loked, and answerde:
"Whether seistow this in ernest or in pley?"
"Nay," quod Arcite, "in ernest, by my fey!
God help me so, me list ful evele pleye."
This Palamon gan knitte his browes tweye:
"It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til other,
That never, for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hindren other,
Ne in noon other cas, my leve brother;
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
In every cas, and I shall forthren thee.
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn;
I wot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.
Thus artow of my counseil, out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly been aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shal, til that myn herte sterve.

Nay certes, fals Arcite, thou shalt nat so.
I loved hir first, and tolde thee my wo
As to my counseil, and my brother sworn
To forthre me, as I have told biforn.
For which thou art ybounden as a knight
To helpen me, if it lay in thy might,
Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
This Arcitë ful proudly spak ageyn,
"Thou shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I;
And thou art fals, I telle thee, utterly;
For *par amour* I loved hir first er thow.
What wiltow seyn? thou wistest nat yet now
Whether she be a womman or goddesse!
Thyn is affeccioun of holinesse,
And myn is love as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure
As to my cosyn, and my brother sworn.
I pose that thou lovedest hir biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That 'who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve to any erthly man.
And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broke al-day for love, in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed.
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,
To stonden in hir grace; namore shal I;
For wel thou wost thyselven, verraily,
That thou and I be dampned to prisoun
Perpetuelly; us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon;

They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon;
Ther cam a kyte, whyl they were so wrothe,
And bar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And therfore at the kinges court, my brother,
Éch man for himself, ther is noon other.
Love if thee list, for I love and ay shal;
And soothly, leve brother, this is al.
Here in this prisoun mote we endure,
And everich of us take his aventure."
Greet was the stryf and long bitwixe hem tweye,
If that I hadde leyser for to seye;
But to theffect. It happed on a day
(To telle it yow as shortly as I may),
A worthy duk that highte Perotheus,
That felawe was unto duk Theseus
Sin thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Athenes, his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye, as he was wont to do,
For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved him as tendrely agayn.
So wel they loved, as olde bokes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte him doun in helle;
But of that story list me nat to write.
Duk Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
And hadde him knowe at Thebes yeer by yere;
And finally, at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
Duk Theseus him leet out of prisoun,
Frely to goon wher that him liste over-al,
In swich a gyse, as I you tellen shal.
This was the forward, pleynly for tendite,
Bitwixen Theseus and him Arcite,

That if so were that Arcite were yfounde
Evere in his lyf, by day or night o stounde
In any contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;
Ther nas noon other remedye ne reed,
But taketh his leve, and homward he him spedde:
Lat him be war, his nekke lith to wedde!
How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feleth thurgh his herte smyte;
He wepeth, wayleth, cryeth pitously;
To sleen himself he wayteth prively.
He seyde, "Allas that day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
Noght in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas, that ever knew I Perotheus!
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;
Than hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.
Only the sighte of hir whom that I serve,
Though that I never hir grace may deserve,
Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
O dere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
"Thyn is the victorie of this aventure,
Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.
In prison? certes nay, but in paradys!
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sight of hir, and I thabsence.
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
That, by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,
Thou maist to thy desyr somtyme atteyne.

But I, that am exiled, and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet despeir,
That ther nis erthe, water, fyr, ne eir,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse;
Farwel my lyf, my lust, and my gladnesse!
"Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune
Of purveiaunce of God, or of Fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they can hemself devyse!
Som man desyreth for to han richesse,
That cause is of his mordre or greet siknesse;
And som man wolde out of his prison fayn,
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
Infinite harmes been in this matere;
We witen nat what thing we prayen here.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;
A dronke man wot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider;
And certes in this world so faren we —
We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often, trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende and hadde a greet opinioun
That, if I mighte escapen from prisoun,
Than hadde I been in joye and perfit hele,
Ther now I am exyled fro my wele.
Syn that I may nat seen yow, Emelye,
I nam but deed; ther nis no remedye."
Upon that other syde Palamon,
Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,

Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youling and clamour.
The pure fettres on his shines grete
Weren of his bittre salte teres wete.
"Allas!" quod he, "Arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al our stryf, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thou yevest litel charge.
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wisdom and manhede,
Assemblen alle the folk of our kynrede,
And make a werre so sharpe on this citee,
That by som aventure, or som tretee,
Thou mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I most nedes lese my lyf.
For, as by wey of possibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage,
More than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
For I mot wepe and wayle whyl I live,
With al the wo that prison may me yive,
And eek with peyne that love me yiveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo."
Therwith the fyr of jalousye up-sterte
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde
The box-tree, or the asshen dede and colde.
Than seyde he, "O cruel goddes, that governe
This world with binding of your word eterne,
And wryten in the table of athamaunt
Your parlement, and your eterne graunt,
What is mankinde more unto yow holde
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beest,

And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
And hath siknesse and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee!
"What governaunce is in this prescience,
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
And yet encreseth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beest is deed he hath no peyne;
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and wo;
Withouten doute it may stonden so.
The answere of this I lete to divynis,
But wel I woot that in this world gret pyne is.
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,
That many a trewe man hath doon meschef,
Goon at his large, and wher him list may turne!
But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that other syde
For jalousye, and fere of him Arcite."
Now wol I stinte of Palamon a lite,
And lete him in his prisoun stille dwelle,
And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.
The somer passeth, and the nightes longe
Encresen double wyse the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner.
I noot which hath the wofuller mester.
For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,

In cheynes and in fettres to been deed;
And Arcite is exyled upon his heed
For evermo as out of that contree,
Ne nevermo he shal his lady see.
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prisoun he moot dwelle alway.
That other wher him list may ride or go,
But seen his lady shal he nevermo.
Now demeth as yow liste, ye that can,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.

Explicit prima Pars. Sequitur pars secunda.

Part II

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde "Allas!"
For seen his lady shal he nevermo.
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde never creature
That is, or shal, whyl that the world may dure.
His sleep, his mete, his drinke is him biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
His eyen holwe, and grisly to biholde;
His hewe falwe, and pale as asshen colde,
And solitarie he was, and ever allone,
And wailling al the night, making his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Than wolde he wepe, he mighte nat be stent;
So feble eek were his spirits, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man coude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.

And in his gere for al the world he ferde
Nat only lyk the loveres maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
Engendred of humour malencolik,
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up-so-doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of him, this woful lovere, daun Arcite.
What sholde I alday of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This cruel torment and this peyne and wo,
At Thebes, in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a night, in sleep as he him leyde,
Him thoughte how that the winged god Mercurie
Biforn him stood and bad him to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;
An hat he werede upon his heres brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;
And seyde him thus, "To Athenes shaltow wende.
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, how sore that me smerte,"
Quod he, "to Athenes right now wol I fare.
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To see my lady, that I love and serve.
In hir presence I recche nat to sterve."
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage al in another kinde;
And right anon it ran him in his minde,
That, sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladye the which he hadde endured,

He mighte wel, if that he bar him lowe,
Live in Athenes evermore unknowe,
And seen his lady wel ny day by day;
And right anon he chaungede his array,
And cladde him as a poure laborer,
And al allone, save oonly a squyer,
That knew his privetee and al his cas,
Which was disgised povrely, as he was,
To Athenes is he goon the nexte way,
And to the court he wente upon a day,
And at the gate he profreth his servyse,
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse;
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
He fil in office with a chamberleyn,
The which that dwelling was with Emelye,
For he was wys, and coude soone espye
Of every servaunt which that serveth here.
Wel coude he hewen wode, and water bere,
For he was yong and mighty for the nones,
And therto he was long and big of bones
To doon that any wight can him devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servyse,
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.
But half so wel biloved a man as he
Ne was ther never in court of his degree;
He was so gentil of condicioun,
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
They seyden that it were a charitee
That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
And putten him in worshipful servyse,
Ther as he mighte his vertu exercyse.
And thus, withinne a whyle, his name is spronge,

Bothe of his dedes and his goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken him so neer
That of his chambre he made him a squyer,
And yaf him gold to mayntene his degree;
And eek men broghte him out of his contree
From yeer to yeer ful privelý his rente;
But honestly and slyly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wyse his lyf he ladde,
And bar him so in pees and eek in werre,
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wol of Palamon a lite.
  In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
This seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,
Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But Palamon? that love destreyneth so,
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo;
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuelly, noght only for a yeer.
Who coude ryme in Englissh proprely
His martirdom?— for sothe, it am nat I.
Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
  It fel that in the seventhe yeer, in May,
The thridde night, as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen more pleyn,
Were it by aventure or destinee,
As, whan a thing is shapen, it shal be,
That, sone after the midnight, Palamoun,
By helping of a freend, brak his prisoun,
And fleeth the citee, faste as he may go,
For he had yive his gayler drinke so

Of a clarree, maad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
That al that night, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he mighte nat awake;
And thus he fleeth as faste as ever he may.
The night was short, and faste by the day,
That nedes-cost he moste himselven hyde,
And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,
With dredful foot than stalketh Palamoun,
For, shortly, this was his opinioun,
That in that grove he wolde him hyde al day,
And in the night than wolde he take his way
To Thebesward, his frendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe him to werreye;
And, shortly, outher he wolde lese his lyf,
Or winnen Emelye unto his wyf;
This is theffect and his entente pleyn.
Now wol I turne unto Arcite ageyn,
That litel wiste how ny that was his care,
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.
The bisy larke, messager of day,
Saluëth in hir song the morwe gray;
And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes hanging on the leves.
And Arcite, that is in the court roial
With Theseus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the myrie day;
And, for to doon his observaunce to May,
Remembring on the poynt of his desyr,
He on a courser, sterting as the fyr,
Is riden into the feeldes, him to pleye,

Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye;
And to the grove, of which that I yow tolde,
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken him a gerland of the greves,
Were it of wodebinde or hawethorn leves,
And loude he song ageyn the sonne shene,
"May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,
I hope that I som grene gete may."
And from his courser with a lusty herte
Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he rometh up and doun,
Ther as by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a bussh that no man mighte him see,
For sore afered of his deeth was he.
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite;
God wot he wolde have trowed it ful lite,
But sooth is seyd, gon sithen many yeres,
That "feeld hath eyen, and the wode hath eres."
It is ful fair a man to bere him evene,
For "alday meeteth men at unset stevene."
Ful litel wot Arcite of his felawe,
That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
  Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,
As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
Now in the croppe, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, sothly for to telle,
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
Right so can gery Venus overcaste

The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
Is gerful, right so chaungeth she array.
"Selde is the Friday al the wyke ylike."
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,
And sette him doun withouten any more:
"Allas!" quod he, "that day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee,
Woltow werreyen Thebes the citee?
Allas, ybrought is to confusioun
The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun!—
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
And of the citee first was crouned king.
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspring
By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
And now I am so caitif and so thrall,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squyer pourely.
And yet doth Juno me wel more shame,
For I dar noght biknowe myn owne name,
But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!
Thus hath your ire our kinrede al for-do,
Save only me, and wrecched Palamoun,
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.
And over al this, to sleen me utterly,
Love hath his fyry dart so brenningly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with your eyen, Emelye!
Ye been the cause wherfor that I dye!
Of al the remenant of myn other care

Ne sette I nat the mountaunce of a tare,
So that I coude doon aught to your plesaunce."
And with that word he fil doun in a traunce
A longe tyme, and afterward he upsterte.
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a cold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He sterte him up out of the buskes thikke,
And seyde, " Arcite, false traitour wikke,
Now artow hent, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my counseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told thee heer-biforn,
And hast byjaped heer duk Theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye.
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hir only and namo;
For I am Palamoun, thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepne have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght that outher thou shalt dye,
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte."
This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he him knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leoun pulled out a swerd,
And seyde thus, " By God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,

That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond,
For I defye the seurtee and the bond
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
What, verray fool, think wel that love is free,
And I wol love hir, maugre al thy might!
But, for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,
And wilnest to darreyne hir by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe, tomorwe I wol nat faile,
Withouten witing of any other wight,
That heer I wol be founden as a knight,
And bringen harneys right ynough for thee,
And chees the beste, and leve the worste for me;
And mete and drinke this night wol I bringe
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddinge.
And, if so be that thou my lady winne,
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
Thou mayst wel have thy lady, as for me."
This Palamon answerde: "I graunte it thee."
And thus they been departed til amorwe,
When ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyd, that "love ne lordshipe
Wol noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe."
Wel finden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
Ful privelý two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.
And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al the harneys him biforn;
And in the grove, at tyme and place y-set,

This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face;
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the leoun or the bere,
And hereth him come russhing in the greves,
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
And thinketh, "Heer cometh my mortel enemy,
Withoute faile, he moot be deed, or I;
For outher I moot sleen him at the gappe,
Or he moot sleen me, if that me mishappe,"
So ferden they, in chaunging of hir hewe,
As fer as everich of hem other knewe.
Ther nas no "good day," ne no saluing;
But streight withouten word or rehersing,
Everich of hem heelp for to armen other,
As frendly as he were his owene brother;
And, after that, with sharpe speres stronge
They foynen ech at other wonder longe.
Thou mightest wene that this Palamoun
In his fighting were as a wood leoun,
And as a cruel tigre was Arcite;
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frothen whyte as foom for ire wood;
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.
And in this wyse I lete hem fighting dwelle;
And forth I wol of Theseus yow telle.
The Destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over-al
The purveiaunce, that God hath seyn biforn,
So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thing by ye or nay,
Yet "somtyme it shall fallen on a day

That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yere."
For certeynly our appetites here,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirous,
And namely at the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther daweth him no day,
That he nis clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunte and horn, and houndes him bisyde.
For in his hunting hath he swich delit,
That it is al his joye and appetit
To been himself the grete hertes bane;
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
Cleer was the day, as I have told er this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,
And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
On hunting be they riden roially.
And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,
In which ther was an hert, as men him tolde,
Duk Theseus the streighte wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rideth him ful right,
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duk wol han a cours at him or tweye,
With houndes, swiche as that him list comaunde.
And whan this duk was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he loketh, and anon
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bores two;
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
So hidously, that with the leeste strook

It semed as it wolde felle an ook;
But what they were, nothing he ne woot.
This duk his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was betwix hem two,
And pulled out a swerd and cride, "Ho,
Namore, up peyne of lesing of your heed!
By mighty Mars, he shal anon be deed,
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen!
But telleth me what myster men ye been,
That been so hardy for to fighten here
Withouten juge or other officere,
As it were in a listes roially?"
This Palamon answerde hastily
And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deeth deserved bothe two.
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge
Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,
But sle me first, for seynte charitee,
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me;
Or sle him first; for, though thou knowe it lite,
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banisshed on his heed,
For which he hath deserved to be deed.
For this is he that cam unto thy gate,
And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yeer,
And thou hast maked him thy chief squyer;
And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun,
That I am thilke woful Palamoun,

That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hote Emelye the brighte,
That I wol dye present in hir sighte.
Therefore I axe deeth and my juwyse;
But sle my felawe in the same wyse,
For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
This worthy duk answerde anon agayn,
And seide, "This is a short conclusioun:
Youre owne mouth, by your confessioun,
Hath dampned you, and I wol it recorde,
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde.
Ye shul be deed, by mighty Mars the rede!"
The quene anon, for verray wommanhede,
Gan for to wepe, and so did Emelye,
And alle the ladies in the companye,
Gret pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
That ever swich a chaunce sholde falle;
For gentil men they were, of greet estat,
And nothing but for love was this debat;
And sawe hir blody woundes, wyde and sore;
And alle cryden, bothe lasse and more,
"Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood,
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte;
And though he firste for ire quook and sterte,
He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause;
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused;
And thus he thoghte wel, that every man

Wol helpe himself in love, if that he can,
And eek delivere himself out of prisoun;
And eek his herte had compassioun
Of wommen, for they wepen ever in oon;
And in his gentil herte he thoghte anoon,
And softe unto himself he seyde, "Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leoun, bothe in word and dede,
To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud despitous man,
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan!
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in swich cas can no divisioun,
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
He gan to loken up with eyen lighte,
And spak thise same wordes al on highte:
"The god of love, a, *benedicite*,
How mighty and how greet a lord is he!
Ageyns his might ther gayneth none obstacles,
He may be cleped a god for his miracles;
For he can maken at his owne gyse
Of everich herte as that him list devyse.
Lo heer, this Arcite and this Palamoun,
That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
And mighte han lived in Thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lyth in my might also,
And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Ybroght hem hyder, bothe for to dye!
Now loketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fool, but if he love?
Bihold, for Goddes sake that sit above,

Se how they blede! be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!
But this is yet the beste game of alle,
That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
Can hem therfor as muche thank as me;
She woot namore of al this hote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!
But al moot been assayed, hoot and cold;
A man moot been a fool, or yong or old;
I woot it by myself ful yore agoon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therfore, sin I knowe of loves peyne,
And woot how sore it can a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his las,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespas,
At requeste of the quene that kneleth here,
And eek of Emelye, my suster dere;
And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
That nevermo ye shul my contree dere,
Ne make werre upon me night ne day,
But been my freendes in al that ye may.
I yow foryeve this trespas every deel."
And they him swore his axing fayre and weel,
And him of lordshipe and of mercy preyde,
And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde,
"To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
Though that she were a quene or a princesse,
Ech of yow bothe is worthy, doutelees,
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees,
(I speke as for my suster Emelye,

For whom ye have this stryf and jelousye)
Ye woot yourself she may not wedden two
At ones, though ye fighten evermo;
That oon of yow, al be him looth or leef,
He moot go pypen in an ivy leef;
This is to seyn, she may nat have bothe,
Al be ye never so jalous, ne so wrothe,
And for-thy, I yow putte in this degree,
That ech of yow shal have his destinee
As him is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
Lo, heer your ende of that I shal devyse.
My wil is this, for plat conclusioun,
Withouten any replicacioun,
If that yow lyketh, tak it for the beste,
That everich of yow shal goon wher him leste
Frely, withouten raunson or daunger,
And this day fifty wykes, fer ne ner,
Everich of yow shal bringe an hundred knightes,
Armed for listes up at alle rightes,
Al redy to darreyne hir by bataille.
And this bihote I yow withouten faille
Upon my trouthe and as I am a knight,
That whether of yow bothe that hath might,
This is to seyn, that whether he or thou
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sleen his contrarie, or out of listes dryve,
Than shal I yeve Emelya to wyve
To whom that fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
The listes shal I maken in this place,
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
As I shal even juge been and trewe.
Ye shul non other ende with me maken,
That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.

And if yow thinketh this is wel ysayd,
Seyth your avys, and holdeth yow apayd.
This is your ende and your conclusioun."
Who loketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who couthe telle, or who couthe endite,
The joye that is maked in the place
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,
And thanked him with al hir herte and might,
And namely the Thebans ofte sythe.
And thus with good hope and with herte blythe
They take hir leve, and homward gonne they ryde
To Thebes, with his olde walles wyde.

Explicit secunda pars. Sequitur pars tercia.

Part III

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence,
If I foryete to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that goth so bisily
To maken up the listes roially;
That swich a noble theatre as it was,
I dar wel seyn that in this world ther nas.
The circuit a myle was aboute,
Walled of stoon, and diched al withoute.
Round was the shap, in maner of compas,
Ful of degrees, the heighte of sixty pas,
That, whan a man was set on o degree,
He lette nat his felawe for to see.
Estward ther stood a gate of marbel whit,
Westward right swich another in the opposit;
And shortly to concluden, swich a place

Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space,
For in the lond ther nas no crafty man,
That geometrie or ars-metrik can,
Ne purtreyour, ne kerver of ymages,
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and devyse.
And for to doon his ryte and sacrifyse,
He estward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddesse of love,
Doon make an auter and an oratorie;
And westward, in the mynde and in memorie
Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
That coste largely of gold a fother;
And northward, in a touret on the wal,
Of alabastre whyt and reed coral
An oratorie riche for to see,
In worship of Diane of chastitee,
Hath Theseus don wroght in noble wyse.
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kerving, and the portreitures,
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,
That weren in thise oratories thre.
First in the temple of Venus maystow se
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slepes, and the sykes colde;
The sacred teeres, and the waymentinge;
The fyry strokes of the desiringe,
That loves servaunts in this lyf enduren;
The othes, that hir covenants assuren;
Plesaunce and Hope, Desyr, Foolhardinesse,
Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,
Charmes and Force, Lesinges, Flaterye,
Dispense, Bisinesse, and Jalousye,

That wered of yelwe goldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sitting on hir hand;
Festes, instruments, caroles, daunces,
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces
Of love, whiche that I rekne and rekne shal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
And mo than I can make of mencioun.
For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellinge,
Was shewed on the wal in portreyinge,
With al the gardin, and the lustinesse.
Nat was foryeten the porter Ydelnesse,
Ne Narcisus the faire of yore agon,
Ne yet the folye of king Salamon,
Ne yet the grete strengthe of Hercules,
Thenchauntements of Medea and Circes,
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,
The riche Cresus, caytif in servage.
Thus may ye seen that Wisdome ne Richesse,
Beautee ne Sleighte, Strengthe ne Hardinesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartye;
For as hir list the world than may she gye.
Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "Allas!"
Suffiseth heer ensamples oon or two,
And though I coude rekne a thousand mo.
The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
Was naked, fleting in the large see,
And fro the navel doun al covered was
With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas;
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellinge;

Above hir heed hir dowves flikeringe;
Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
Upon his shuldres winges hadde he two,
And blind he was, as it is ofte sene;
A bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kene.
  Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
The portreiture, that was upon the wal
Within the temple of mighty Mars the rede?
Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede,
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place,
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilke colde frosty regioun,
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
  First on the wal was peynted a forest,
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to biholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough,
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough;
And downward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which thentree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see;
And ther-out cam a rage and such a veze,
That it made al the gates for to rese.
The northren light in at the dores shoon,
For windowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
The dores were alle of adamant eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With iren tough, and, for to make it strong,
Every piler, the temple to sustene,
Was tonne-greet, of iren bright and shene.

Ther saugh I first the derke ymagining
Of felonye, and al the compassing;
The cruel ire, reed as any glede;
The pykepurs, and eek the pale dred;
The smyler with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepene brenning with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the mordring in the bedde;
The open werre, with woundes al bi-bledde;
Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace.
Al ful of chirking was that sory place.
The sleere of himself yet saugh I ther,
His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
The nayl ydriven in the shode a-night;
The colde deeth, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
With disconfort and sory contenaunce;
Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughing in his rage,
Armed compleynt, out-hees, and fiers outrage;
The careyne in the bussh, with throte ycorve;
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve;
The tiraunt, with the prey by force yraft;
The toun destroyed, ther was no thing laft.
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel;
Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte.
The carter over-riden with his carte,
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smith
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his stith.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,

Saw I Conquest sittinge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerde over his heed
Hanging by a sotil twynes threed;
Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deeth depeynted ther-biforn,
By manasinge of Mars, right by figure;
So was it shewed in that portreiture
As is depeynted in the sterres above
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may not rekne hem alle thogh I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte stood,
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood;
And over his heed ther shynen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
That oon Puella, that other Rubeus.
This god of armes was arrayed thus —
A wolf ther stood biforn him at his feet
With eyen rede, and of a man he eet;
With sotil pencel was depeynt this storie,
In redoutinge of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Diane the chaste,
As shortly as I can, I wol me haste,
To telle yow al the descripcioun.
Depeynted been the walles up and doun
Of hunting and of shamfast chastitee.
Ther saugh I how woful Calistopee,
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a womman to a bere,
And after was she maad the lode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I can say no ferre,

Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree —
I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
But Penneus doughter, which that highte Dane.
Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,
For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes have him caught,
And freten him, for that they knewe him naught.
Yet peynted was a litel forther-moor,
How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,
And Meleagre, and many another mo,
For which Diane wroughte him care and wo.
Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
The whiche me list nat drawen to memorie.
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
And undernethe her feet she hadde a mone,
Wexing it was, and sholde wanie sone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde and arwes in a cas.
Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travailing was hir biforn,
But, for hir child so longe was unborn,
Ful pitously Lucina gan she calle,
And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle."
Wel coude he peynten lifly that it wroghte,
With many a florin he the hewes boghte.
Now been the listes maad, and Theseus,
That at his grete cost arrayed thus
The temples and the theatre every del,
Whan it was doon, him liked wonder wel.
But stinte I wol of Theseus a lyte,

And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of hir retourninge,
That everich sholde an hundred knightes bringe,
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde;
And til Athenes, hir covenants for to holde,
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knightes
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
And sikerly, ther trowed many a man
That nevere, sithen that the world bigan,
As for to speke of knighthod of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas, of so fewe, so noble a compaignye;
For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
Hath preyed that he mighte ben of that game;
And wel was him that therto chosen was.
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas,
Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knight,
That loveth paramours, and hath his might,
Were it in Engelond, or elleswhere,
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there;
To fighte for a lady, *benedicite!*
It were a lusty sighte for to see;
And right so ferden they with Palamon;
With him ther wenten knightes many oon.
Som wol ben armed in an habergeoun,
And in a brest-plat and a light gipoun;
And somme woln have a peyre plates large;
And somme woln have a Pruce sheld or a targe;
Somme woln been armed on hir legges weel,
And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel, —
Ther nis no newe gyse, that it nas old.
Armed were they, as I have you told,

Everich after his opinioun.
Ther maistow seen coming with Palamoun
Lygurge himself, the grete king of Trace;
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face;
The cercles of his eyen in his heed,
They gloweden bitwixe yelow and reed;
And lyk a griffon loked he aboute,
With kempe heeres on his browes stoute;
His limes grete, his brawnes harde and stronge,
His shuldres brode, his armes rounde and longe.
And as the gyse was in his contree,
Ful hye upon a char of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in the trays.
Instede of cote-armure over his harnays,
With nayles yelwe, and brighte as any gold,
He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak, for-old.
His longe heer was kembd bihinde his bak,
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.
A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,
Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubies and of dyamaunts.
Aboute his char ther wenten white alaunts,
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
To hunten at the leoun or the deer,
And folwed him with mosel faste ybounde,
Colered of golde, and torets fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.
With Arcita in stories as men finde,
The grete Emetreus, the king of Inde,
Upon a stede bay trapped in steel,
Covered in cloth of gold diapred wel,
Cam riding lyk the god of armes, Mars.

His cote-armure was of cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete;
His sadel was of brend gold, newe ybete;
A mantelet upon his shuldre hanginge
Bretful of rubies reede, as fyr sparklinge;
His crispe heer lyk ringes was yronne,
And that was yelow, and glitered as the sonne;
His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,
A fewe fraknes in his face yspreynd,
Betwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,
And as a leoun he his loking caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
His berd was wel bigonne for to springe;
His voys was as a trompe thunderinge;
Upon his heed he wered, of laurer grene,
A gerland fresh and lusty for to sene;
Upon his hand he bar, for his deduyt,
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
An hundred lordes hadde he with him there,
Al armed, sauf hir heddes, in al hir gere,
Ful richely in alle maner thinges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kinges,
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.
Aboute this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leoun and leopart.
And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some,
Been on the Sonday to the citee come
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
And inned hem, everich in his degree,

He festeth hem, and doth so greet labour
To esen hem, and doon hem al honour,
That yet men weneth that no mannes wit
Of noon estat ne coude amenden it.
The minstralcye, the service at the feste,
The grete yiftes to the moste and leste,
The riche array of Theseus paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
What ladies fairest been or best daunsinge,
Or which of hem can dauncen best and singe,
Ne who most felingly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes liggen on the floor adoun;
Of al this make I now no mencioun;
But al theffect, that thinketh me the beste.
Now comth the poynt, and herkneth if yow leste.
The Sonday night, er day bigan to springe,
When Palamon the larke herde singe,
Although it nere nat day by houres two,
Yet song the larke, and Palamon also.
With holy herte and with an heigh corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrimage
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
I mene Venus, honurable and digne.
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
Unto the listes, ther hir temple was,
And doun he kneleth with ful humble chere
And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.
"Faireste of faire, o lady myn Venus,
Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
Thou gladere of the mount of Citheroun.
For thilke love thou haddest to Adoun,
Have pitee of my bittre teeres smerte,

And tak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
Allas! I ne have no langage to telle
Theffectes ne the torments of myn helle;
Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye;
I am so confus, that I can noght seye.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wele
My thought, and seest what harmes that I fele,
Considere al this, and rewe upon my sore,
As wisly as I shal for evermore,
Emforth my might, thy trewe servant be,
And holden werre alwey with chastitee;
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe.
Ne I ne axe not tomorwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie
Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,
But I wolde have fully possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse;
Find thou the maner how, and in what wyse.
I recche nat, but it may bettre be,
To have victorie of hem, or they of me
So that I have my lady in myne armes.
For though so be that Mars is god of armes,
Your vertu is so greet in hevene above
That, if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
Thy temple wol I worshipe evermo,
And on thyn auter, wher I ryde or go,
I wol doon sacrifice, and fyres bete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady swete,
Than preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Than rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcita winne hir to his wyf.

This is theffect and ende of my preyere,
Yif me my love, thou blisful lady dere."
Whan the orisoun was doon of Palamon,
His sacrifice he dide, and that anon
Ful pitously, with alle circumstaunces,
Al telle I noght as now his observaunces.
But atte laste the statue of Venus shook,
And made a signe, wherby that he took
That his preyere accepted was that day.
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his bone;
And with glad herte he wente him hoom ful sone.
The thridde houre inequal that Palamon
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,
Up roos the sonne and up roos Emelye,
And to the temple of Diane gan hye.
Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,
Thencens, the clothes, and the remenant al
That to the sacrifice longen shal;
The hornes fulle of meth, as was the gyse;
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrifyse.
Smoking the temple, ful of clothes faire,
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,
Hir body wessh with water of a welle;
But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
But it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game to heren al,
To him that meneth wel, it were no charge,
But it is good a man ben at his large.
Hir brighte heer was kempd, untressed al;
A coroune of a grene ook cerial
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and mete.

Two fyres on the auter gan she bete,
And dide hir thinges, as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes, and thise bokes olde.
Whan kindled was the fyr, with pitous chere
Unto Diane she spak as ye may here.
"O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,
Quene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe
Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
As keep me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,
That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
Desire to been a mayden al my lyf,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thou woost, yet of thy compaignye,
A mayde, and love hunting and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to been a wyf, and be with childe.
Nought wol I knowe the compaignye of man.
Now help me, lady, sith ye may and can,
For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I preye thee withoute more,
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two;
And fro me turne awey hir hertes so,
That al hir hote love, and hir desyr,
And al hir bisy torment, and hir fyr
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
Or if my destinee be shapen so,
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,

As sende me him that most desireth me.
Bihold, goddesse of clene chastitee,
The bittre teres that on my chekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde, and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whyl I live a mayde, I wol thee serve."
The fyres brenne upon the auter clere,
Whyl Emelye was thus in hir preyere;
But sodeinly she saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
And quiked agayn, and after that anon
That other fyr was queynt, and al agon;
And as it queynte it made a whistelinge,
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brenninge,
And at the brondes ende out-ran anoon
As it were blody dropes many oon;
For which so sore agast was Emelye,
That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye,
For she ne wiste what it signifyed;
But only for the fere thus hath she cryed,
And weep that it was pitee for to here.
And therwithal Diane gan appere,
With bowe in hond, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde, "Doghter, stint thyn hevinesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word write and confermed,
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo;
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fyres which that on myn auter brenne
Shul thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."

And with that word the arwes in the cas
Of the goddesse clateren faste and ringe,
And forth she wente and made a vanisshinge;
For which this Emelye astoned was,
And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas!
I putte me in thy protecciouN,
Diane, and in thy disposicioun."
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.
This is theffect, ther is namore to seye.
The nexte houre of Mars folwinge this,
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrifise,
With alle the rytes of his payen wise.
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun,
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun,
"O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee list devyse,
Accept of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhede, that I may ben oon of thyne,
Than preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne. . . .[1]

. . . . . .

For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte,
Have routhe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonning, as thou wost,
And, as I trowe, with love offended most,
That ever was any lyves creature;

[1] See Note.

For she, that doth me al this wo endure,
Ne reccheth never wher I sinke or flete.
And wel I woot, er she me mercy hete,
I moot with strengthe winne hir in the place;
And wel I woot withouten help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.
Than help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille,
For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me;
And do that I tomorwe have victorie.
Myn be the travaille, and thyn be the glorie.
Thy soverein temple wol I most honouren
Of any place, and alwey most labouren
In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,
And alle the armes of my compaignye;
And evermo, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fyr I wol biforn thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:
My berd, myn heer that hongeth long adoun,
That never yet ne felte offensioun
Of rasour nor of shere, I wol the yive,
And ben thy trewe servant whil I live.
Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes sore,
Yif me the victorie, I aske thee namore."
  The preyere stinte of Arcita the stronge,
The ringes on the temple dore that honge,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somwhat him agaste.
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,
That it gan al the temple for to lighte;
And swete smel the ground anon up-yaf;
And Arcita anon his hand up-haf,

And more encens into the fyr he caste,
With othere rytes mo ; and atte laste
The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk ringe.
And with that soun he herde a murmuringe
Ful lowe and dim, that sayde thus, " Victorie."
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anon unto his inne is fare,
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon swich stryf ther is bigonne
For thilke graunting, in the hevene above,
Bitwixe Venus, the goddesse of love,
And Mars, the sterne god armipotente,
That Jupiter was bisy it to stente ;
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew so manye of aventures olde,
Fond in his olde experience an art,
That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
As sooth is sayd, " elde hath greet avantage,"
" In elde is bothe wisdom and usage,"
" Men may the olde at-renne, and noght at-rede."
Saturne anon, to stinten stryf and drede,
Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
Of al this stryf he gan remedie fynde.
" My dere doughter Venus," quod Saturne,
" My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath more power than wot any man.
Myn is the drenching in the see so wan ;
Myn is the prison in the derke cote ;
Myn is the strangling and hanging by the throte ;
The murmure and the cherles rebelling,
The groyning and the pryve empoysoning.
I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,

Whyl I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
Myn is the ruine of the hye halles,
The falling of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter;
I slow Sampsoun in shaking the piler.
And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons and the castes olde;
My looking is the fader of pestilence.
Now weep namore, I shal doon diligence
That Palamon, that is thyn owne knight,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
Though Mars shal helpe his knight, yet nathelees
Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme pees,
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun,
That causeth al day swich divisioun.
I am thyn ayel, redy at thy wille;
Weep thou namore, I wol thy lust fulfille."
Now wol I stinten of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus, goddesse of love,
And telle yow, as pleynly as I can,
The grete effect, for which that I bigan.

Explicit tercia pars. Sequitur pars quarta.

Part IV

Greet was the feste in Athenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce,
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse.
But by the cause that they sholde ryse
Erly, for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir reste wenten they at night.

And on the morwe, whan that day gan springe,
Of hors and harneys noyse and clateringe
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, upon stedes and palfreys.
Ther maystow seen devising of herneys
So uncouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
Of goldsmithrie, of browding, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testers, and trappures;
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberks, cote-armures;
Lordes in paraments on hir courseres,
Knightes of retenue, and eek squyeres
Nailinge the speres, and helmes bokelinge,
Gigginge of sheeldes, with layneres lacinge;
Ther as need is, they weren no-thing ydel;
The fomy stedes on the golden brydel
Gnawinge, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikinge to and fro;
Yemen on fote, and communes many oon
With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;
The paleys ful of peples up and doun,
Heer thre, ther ten, holding hir questioun,
Divyninge of thise Theban knightes two.
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so;
Somme helden with him with the blake berd,
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke herd;
Somme sayde, he looked grim and he wolde fighte,
He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte;
Thus was the halle ful of divyninge,
Longe after that the sonne gan to springe.

The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked

With minstralcye and noyse that was maked,
Held yet the chambre of his paleys riche,
Til that the Theban knightes, bothe yliche
Honoured, were into the paleys fet.
Duk Theseus was at a window set,
Arrayed right as he were a god in trone.
The peple presseth thider-ward ful sone
Him for to seen, and doon heigh reverence,
And eek to herkne his hest and his sentence.
An heraud on a scaffold made an "Ho!"
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo;
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
Tho shewed he the mighty dukes wille.
"The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
Considered that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse
Of mortal bataille now in this emprise;
Wherfore, to shapen that they shul nat dye,
He wol his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, ne pollax, ne short knyf
Into the listes sende, ne thider bringe;
Ne short swerd, for to stoke with poynt bytinge,
No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde.
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
But o cours with a sharp ygrounde spere;
Foyne, if him list, on fote, himself to were.
And he that is at meschief shal be take,
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde;
But thider he shal by force, and ther abyde.
And if so falle, the chieftayn be take
On either side, or elles sleen his make,

No lenger shal the turneyinge laste.
God spede yow! Goth forth, and ley on faste.
With long swerd and with maces fight your fille.
Goth now your wey; this is the lordes wille."
  The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
So loude cryden they with mery stevene,
"God save swich a lord, that is so good,
He wilneth no destruccioun of blood!"
  Up goon the trompes and the melodye,
And to the listes rit the compaignye
By ordinaunce, thurghout the citee large,
Hanged with cloth of gold, and nat with sarge.
Ful lyk a lord this noble duk gan ryde,
Thise two Thebanes upon either syde;
And after rood the quene and Emelye,
And after that another compaignye
Of oon and other after hir degree.
And thus they passen thurghout the citee,
And to the listes come they by tyme.
It nas not of the day yet fully pryme,
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye.
Ypolita the quene and Emelye,
And other ladies in degrees aboute.
Unto the seetes presseth al the route;
And westward, thurgh the gates under Marte,
Arcite, and eek the hundred of his parte,
With baner reed is entred right anon;
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is under Venus, estward in the place,
With baner whyt, and hardy chere and face.
In al the world, to seken up and doun,
So evene withouten variacioun,
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye,

For ther nas noon so wys that coude seye
That any hadde of other avauntage,
Of worthinesse, ne of estaat, ne age,
So evene were they chosen, for to gesse;
And in two renges faire they hem dresse.
Whan that hir names rad were everichoon,
That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon,
Tho were the gates shet, and cried was loude,
"Do now your devoir, yonge knightes proude!"
The heraudes lefte hir priking up and doun;
Now ringen trompes loude and clarioun;
Ther is namore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arest;
In goth the sharpe spore into the syde.
Ther seen men who can juste and who can ryde;
Ther shiveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up springen speres twenty foot on highte;
Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte;
The helmes they to-hewen and to-shrede;
Out brest the blood with sterne stremes rede;
With mighty maces the bones they to-breste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun goth al;
He rolleth under foot as doth a bal;
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,
And he him hurtleth with his hors adoun;
He thurgh the body is hurt, and sithen ytake,
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,
As forward was, right ther he moste abyde;
Another lad is on that other side.
And somtyme doth hem Theseus to reste,
Hem to refresshe, and drinken if hem leste.

Ful ofte a-day han thise Thebanes two
Togidre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo;
Unhorsed hath ech other of hem tweye.
Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye,
Whan that hir whelp is stole whan it is lyte,
So cruel on the hunte, as is Arcite
For jelous herte upon this Palamoun;
Ne in Belmarie there nis so fel leoun,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte;
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
  Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede,
For, er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The stronge king Emetreus gan hente
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flesh to byte;
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawe unto the stake.
And in the rescous of this Palamoun
The stronge king Ligurge is born adoun;
And king Emetreus, for al his strengthe,
Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
So hitte him Palamon er he were take,
But al for noght; he was broght to the stake.
His hardy herte mighte him helpe naught;
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
By force, and eek by composicioun.
  Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
That moot namore goon agayn to fighte?
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte,
Unto the folk that foghten thus echon

He cryde, "Ho, namore, for it is don!
I wol be trewe juge, and no partye.
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelye,
That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne."
Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne
For joye of this, so loude and heigh withalle,
It semed that the listes sholde falle.
What can now faire Venus doon above?
What seith she now, what doth this quene of love,
But wepeth so, for wanting of hir wille,
Til that hir teeres in the listes fille?
She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hold thy pees;
Mars hath his wille, his knight hath al his bone,
And, by myn heed, thou shalt ben esed sone."
The trompes with the loude minstralcye,
The heraudes, that ful loude yolle and crye,
Been in hir wele for joye of daun Arcite.
But herkneth me, and stinteth now a lyte,
Which a miracle ther bifel anon.
This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser, for to shewe his face,
He priketh endelong the large place,
Loking upward upon this Emelye;
And she agayn him caste a frendlich ye
(For wommen, as to speken in comune,
They folwen al the favour of fortune),
And was al his chere, as in his herte.
Out of the ground a fyr infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep asyde, and foundred as he leep;
And er that Arcite may taken keep,

He pighte him on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,
His brest to-brosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.
Tho was he corven out of his harneys,
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
And alway crying after Emelye.
Duk Theseus, with al his compaignye,
Is comen hoom to Athenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght discomforten hem alle.
Men seyden eek that Arcite shal nat dye.
He shal ben heled of his maladye.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
Al were they sore yhurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest-boon.
To othere woundes and to broken armes,
Some hadden salves and some hadden charmes,
Fermacies of herbes, and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
Conforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the longe night
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden no disconfitinge,
But as a justes or a tourneyinge;
For soothly ther was no disconfiture,

For falling nis nat but an aventure;
Ne to be lad by fors unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,
O persone allone, withouten mo,
And haried forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eek his steede driven forth with staves,
With foot-men, bothe yemen and eek knaves,
It nas aretted him no vileinye;
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.
For which anon duk Theseus leet crye,
To stinten alle rancour and envye,
The gree as wel of o syde as of other.
And either syde ylyk as otheres brother;
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,
And fully heeld a feste dayes three;
And conveyed the kinges worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And hoom wente every man the righte way;
Ther was namore, but "Far wel!" "Have good day!"
Of this bataille I wol namore endyte,
But speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the sore
Encreseth at his herte more and more.
The clothered blood, for any lechecraft,
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
That neither veyne-blood ne ventusinge,
Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helpinge.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural,
Ne may the venim voyden ne expelle.
The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venim and corrupcioun.

Him gayneth neither, for to gete his lyf,
Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;
Al is to-brosten thilke regioun;
Nature hath now no dominacioun;
And certeynly, ther nature wol nat wirche,
Farewel, phisik! go ber the man to chirche.
This al and som, that Arcita moot dye,
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palamon, that was his cosyn dere;
Than seyde he thus, as ye shul after here:
"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o poynt of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love most —
But I biquethe the service of my gost
To yow aboven every creature,
Sin that my lyf may no lenger dure.
Allas, the wo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! allas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departing of our compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes quene! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Farwel, my swete fo! myn Emelye!
And softe tak me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had stryf and rancour, many a day a-gon,
For love of yow, and for my jelousye;
And Jupiter so wys my soule gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,

With alle circumstaunces trewely,
That is to seyn, trouthe, honour, knighthede,
Wisdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kinrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf.
And if that ever ye shul been a wyf,
Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
And with that word his speche faille gan,
For from his feet up to his brest was come
The cold of deeth, that hadde him overcome;
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital strengthe is lost and al a-go.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte syk and sore,
Gan faillen when the herte felte deeth.
Dusked his eyen two and failled breeth,
But on his lady yet caste he his ye;
His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"
His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther,
As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.
Therfore I stinte, I nam no divinistre;
Of soules finde I nat in this registre,
Ne me ne list thilke opiniouns to telle
Of hem, though that they wryten wher they dwelle.
Arcite is cold, ther Mars his soule gye;
Now wol I speken forth of Emelye.
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his suster took anon
Swowninge, and bar hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day,

To tellen how she weep, both eve and morwe?
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe,
Whan that hir housbonds been from hem a-go,
That for the more part they sorwen so,
Or elles fallen in swich maladye,
That at the laste certeinly they dye.
Infinite been the sorwes and the teres
Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres,
In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban;
For him ther wepeth bothe child and man;
So greet a weping was ther noon, certayn,
Whan Ector was ybroght, al fresh yslayn,
To Troye. Allas! the pitee that was ther,
Cracching of chekes, rending eek of heer.
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
"And haddest gold ynough and Emelye?"
No man mighte gladen Theseus,
Savinge his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he had seyn it chaungen up and doun,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
"Right as ther deyed never man," quod he,
"That he ne livede in erthe in som degree,
Right so ther livede never man," he seyde,
"In al this worlde, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nis but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we been pilgrimes, passinge to and fro;
Deeth is an ende of every worldly sore."
And over al this yet seyde he muchel more
To this effect, ful wysly to enhorte
The peple that they sholde hem reconforte.
Duk Theseus, with al his bisy cure,

Caste now wher that the sepulture
Of good Arcite may best ymaked be,
And eek most honurable in his degree.
And at the laste he took conclusioun,
That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
That in that selve grove, swote and grene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
His compleynt, and for love his hote fires,
He wolde make a fyr, in which thoffice
Funeral he mighte all accomplice;
And leet comaunde anon to hakke and hewe
The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
In colpons wel arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte feet they renne,
And ryde anon at his comaundement.
And after this Theseus hath ysent
After a bere, and it al overspradde
With cloth of gold, the richest that he hadde;
And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite;
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves whyte;
Eek on his heed a croune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde him, bare the visage, on the bere;
Therwith he weep that pitee was to here.
And for the peple sholde seen him alle,
Whan it was day, he broghte him to the halle,
That roreth of the crying and the soun.
  Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,
With flotery berd, and ruggy ashy heres,
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teres,
And passing othere of weping, Emelye,
The rewfulleste of al the compaignye.

In as muche as the service sholde be
The more noble and riche in his degree,
Duk Theseus leet forth three steedes bringe,
That trapped were in steel al gliteringe,
And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
Upon thise steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seten folk, of which oon bar his sheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys, —
Of brend gold was the cas, and eek the harneys;
And riden forth a pas with sorweful chere
Toward the grove, as ye shul after here.
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres carieden the bere,
With slake pas, and eyen rede and wete,
Thurghout the citee, by the maister-strete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is al the strete ywrye.
Upon the right hond wente old Egeus,
And on that other syde duk Theseus,
With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn;
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye;
And after that cam woful Emelye,
With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
To do thoffice of funeral servyse.
  Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillinge
Was at the service and the fyr-makinge,
That with his grene top the heven raughte,
And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;
This is to seyn, the bowes were so brode.
Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode.
But how the fyr was maked up on highte,

And eek the names how the treës highte,
As ook, firre, birch, asp, alder, holm, popler,
Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chasteyn, lind, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasel, ew, whippeltre,
How they weren feld shal nat be told for me;
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun,
Disherited of hir habitacioun,
In which they woneden in reste and pees,
Nymphes, faunes, and amadriades;
Ne how the bestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And than with drye stokkes cloven a three,
And than with grene wode and spicerye,
And than with cloth of gold, and with perrye,
And gerlandes hanging with ful many a flour,
The mirre, thencens, with al so greet odour;
Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is;
Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desyr;
Ne what jewels men in the fyr tho caste,
Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
Ne how som caste hir sheeld, and som hir spere,
And of hir vestiments, whiche that they were,
And cuppes ful of wyn, and milk, and blood,
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood;
Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
Thryes riden al the fyr aboute

Upon the left hand, with a loud shoutinge,
And thryes with hir speres clateringe;
And thryes how the ladies gonne crye;
Ne how that lad was homward Emelye;
Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde;
Ne how that liche-wake was yholde
Al thilke night, ne how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes; ne kepe I nat to seye
Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,
Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.
I wol nat tellen eek how that they goon
Hoom til Athenes whan the pley is doon.
But shortly to the poynt than wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.
  By processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres
Al stinted is the moorning and the teres
Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
Than semed me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, upon certeyn poynts and cas;
Among the whiche poynts yspoken was
To have with certeyn contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
Unwist of him what was the cause and why;
But in his blake clothes sorwefully
He cam at his comaundement in hye.
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
And Theseus abiden hadde a space
Er any word cam from his wyse brest,
His eyen sette he ther as was his lest,
And with a sad visage he syked stille,

And after that right thus he seyde his wille.
"The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was theffect, and heigh was his entente;
Wel wiste he why, and what therof he mente;
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.
That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,
"Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
Certeyne dayes and duracioun
To al that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge;
Ther needeth non auctoritee tallegge,
For it is preved by experience,
But that me list declaren my sentence.
Than may men by this ordre wel discerne,
That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
"Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every part deryveth from his hool.
For nature hath nat take his biginning
Of no partye ne cantel of a thing,
But of a thing that parfit is and stable,
Descending so, til it be corrumpable.
And therfore of his wise purveiaunce,
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
That speces of thinges and progressiouns
Shullen enduren by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye;
This maistow understonde and seen at eye.
"Lo the ook, that hath so long a norisshinge
From tyme that it first biginneth springe,

And hath so long a lyf as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Under our feet, on which we trede and goon,
Yit wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.
The brode river somtyme wexeth dreye,
The grete tounes see we wane and wende;
Than may ye see that al this thing hath ende.
"Of man and womman seen we wel also,
That nedeth in oon of thise termes two,
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age,
He moot ben deed, the king as shal a page;
Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may se.
Ther helpeth noght, all goth that ilke weye.
Than may I seyn that al this thing moot deye.
What maketh this but Jupiter the king,
The which is prince and cause of alle thing,
Converting al unto his propre welle,
From which it is deryved, sooth to telle?
And here-agayns no creature on lyve,
Of no degree, availleth for to stryve.
"Thanne is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken 'vertu of necessitee'
And take it wel that we may nat eschue,
And namely that to us alle is due.
And whoso gruccheth ought, he doth folye,
And rebel is to him that al may gye
And certeynly a man hath most honour
To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his gode name;
Than hath he doon his freend, ne him, no shame.
And gladder oghte his freend ben of his deeth,

Whan with honour up-yolden is his breeth,
Than whan his name apalled is for age,
For al forgeten is his vasselage.
Than is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dyen whan that he is best of name.
The contrarie of all this is wilfulnesse.
Why grucchen we, why have we hevinesse,
That good Arcite, of chivalrye flour,
Departed is, with duetee and honour,
Out of this foule prison of this lyf?
Why grucchen heer his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare that loved hem so wel?
Can he hem thank? Nay, God woot, never a del
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.
"What may I conclude of this longe serie,
But after wo I rede us to be merie,
And thanken Jupiter of all his grace?
And er that we departen from this place,
I rede that we make of sorwes two
O parfit joye, lasting evermo:
And looketh now, wher most sorwe is herinne,
Ther wol we first amenden and biginne.
"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
With al thavys heer of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, thyn owne knight,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and might,
And ever hath doon, sin that ye first him knewe,
That ye shul, of your grace, upon him rewe,
And taken him for housbonde and for lord.
Leen me your hond, for this is our acord.
Lat see now of your wommanly pitee.
He is a kinges brother sone, pardee,

And, though he were a poure bacheler,
Sin he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
It moste been considered, leveth me;
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."
Than seyde he thus to Palamon ful right,
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermoning
To make yow assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond."
Betwixen hem was maad anon the bond,
That highte matrimoigne or mariage,
By al the counseil and the baronage.
And thus with alle blisse and melodye
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye.
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,
Sende him his love, that hath it dere aboght.
For now is Palamon in alle wele,
Living in blisse, in richesse, and in hele;
And Emelye him loveth so tendrely,
And he hir serveth also gentilly,
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
Of jalousie, or any other tene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;
And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.

Here is ended the Knightes Tale.

HEAD-LINK TO SIR THOPAS

[B. 1881–1901]

Bihold the Murye Wordes of the Host to Chaucer

WHAN seyd was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was that wonder was to se,
Til that our Hoste japen tho bigan,
And than at erst he loked upon me,
And seyde thus, "What man artow?" quod he,
"Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I se thee stare.

Approche neer, and loke up murily.
Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place.
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his countenance,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

Sey now somwhat, sin other folk han sayd.
Tel us a tale of mirthe, and that anoon."
"Hoste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvel apayd,
For other tale, certes, can I noon,
But of a ryme I lerned longe agoon."
"Ye, that is good," quod he; "now shul we here
Som deyntee thing, me thinketh, by his chere."

Explicit.

THE NONNE PREESTES TALE

[B. 4011–4636]

Here Biginneth the Nonne Preestes Tale of the Cok and Hen, Chauntecleer and Pertelote

A POURE widwe, somdel stape in age,
Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
Biside a grove, stonding in a dale.
This widwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Sin thilke day that she was last a wyf,
In pacience ladde a ful simple lyf,
For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
By housbondrie of swich as God hir sente,
She fond hirself, and eek hir doghtren two.
Three large sowes hadde she, and namo,
Three kyn and eek a sheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hir halle,
In which she eet ful many a sclendre meel.
Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel;
No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte,
Hir diete was accordant to hir cote;
Repleccioun ne made hir never sik;
Attempre dyete was al hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hir nothing for to daunce,
Napoplexie shente nat hir heed;
No wyn ne drank she, neither whyt ne reed;
Hir bord was served most with whyt and blak,
Milk and broun breed, in which she fond no lak,
Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye,
For she was as it were a maner deye.

A yerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,
In which she hadde a cok, hight Chauntecleer,
In al the land of crowing nas his peer.
His vois was merier than the merye orgon
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon;
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his logge,
Than is a clokke, or an abbey orlogge.
By nature knew he ech ascencioun
Of equinoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Than crew he, that it mighte nat ben amended.
His comb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailled as it were a castel wal.
His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;
Lyk asur were his legges and his toon;
His nayles whiter than the lilie flour,
And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce
Sevene hennes, for to doon al his plesaunce,
Whiche were his sustres and his paramours,
And wonder lyk to him, as of colours;
Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote.
Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,
And compaignable, and bar hirself so faire,
Sin thilke day that she was seven night old,
That trewely she "hath" the "herte in hold"
Of Chauntecleer loken in every lith;
He loved hir so, that wel him was therwith.
But swich a joye was it to here hem singe,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to springe,
In swete accord, "My lief is faren in londe."

For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,
Bestes and briddes coude speke and singe.
And so bifel that, in a daweninge,
As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle
Sat on his perche that was in the halle,
And next him sat this faire Pertelote,
This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is drecched sore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herde him rore,
She was agast, and seyde, "O herte deere,
What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?
Ye been a verray sleper, fy for shame!"
And he answerde and seyde thus, "Madame,
I pray yow, that ye take it nat agrief:
By God, me mette I was in swich meschief
Right now, that yet myn herte is sore afright.
Now God," quod he, "my swevene recche aright,
And keep my body out of foul prisoun!
Me mette how that I romed up and doun
Withinne our yerde, wher as I saugh a beest,
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest
Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yelwe and reed;
And tipped was his tail, and bothe his eres
With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heres;
His snowte smal, with glowing eyen tweye.
Yet of his look for fere almost I deye;
This caused me my groning, doutelees."
"Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertelees!
Allas!" quod she, "for, by that God above,
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love;
I can nat love a coward, by my feith!
For certes, what so any womman seith

We alle desiren, if it mighte be
To han housbondes hardy, wyse, and free,
And secree, and no nigard, ne no fool,
Ne him that is agast of every tool,
Ne noon avauntour, by that God above!
How dorste ye seyn for shame unto your love,
That any thing mighte make yow aferd?
Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?
Allas! and conne ye been agast of swevenis?
Nothing, God wot, but vanitee, in sweven is.
Swevenes engendren of repleccioun s,
And ofte of fume, and of complecciouns,
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.
Certes this dreem, which ye han met tonight,
Cometh of the grete superfluitee
Of youre rede *colera*, pardee,
Which causeth folk to dreden in here dremes
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,
Of rede bestes, that they wol hem byte,
Of contek and of whelpes grete and lyte;
Right as the humour of malencolye
Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crye,
For fere of blake beres, or boles blake,
Or elles, blake develes wole him take.
Of othere humours coude I telle also,
That werken many a man in sleep ful wo:
But I wol passe as lightly as I can. . . ."

Pertelote reminds him that Cato said that no reliance should be placed on dreams, and advises the aid of physic for his melancholy. Chauntecleer returns courteous thanks for her advice, but points out that many a man greater than Cato has believed that dreams have meaning. He tells the story (originally from classical sources) of two acquaintances lodging apart in a strange city, one of whom dreamed that the other had been murdered and his body

hidden in a cart-load of dung, and how the dream led to the discovery of the murder; this story he follows with others of like true warnings afforded by dreams. He then gracefully concludes his long and admirable oration with a compliment to Madame Pertelote:

"Now let us speke of mirthe, and stinte al this;
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thing God hath sent me large grace;
For whan I see the beautee of your face,
Ye been so scarlet-reed about youre yen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen.
For, also siker as '*In principio*,'
'*Mulier est hominis confusio*;'
Madame, the sentence of this Latin is—
Womman is mannes joye and al his blis. . . .
I am so ful of joye and of solas
That I defye bothe sweven and dreem."
And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,
For it was day, and eek his hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
For he had founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
Roial he was, he was namore aferd . . .
He looketh as it were a grim leoun;
And on his toos he rometh up and doun,
Him deyned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chukketh, whan he hath a corn yfounde,
And to him rennen thanne his wyves alle.
Thus roial, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture,
And after wol I telle his aventure.
Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was compleet, and passed were also
— Sin March bigan — thritty dayes and two,

Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,
His seven wyves walking by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somwhat more,
And knew by kynde, and by noon other lore,
That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene.
"The sonne," he sayde, "is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrees and oon, and more, ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they singe,
And see the fresshe floures how they springe;
Ful is myn hert of revel and solas."
But sodeynly him fil a sorweful cas;
For ever the "latter ende of joye is wo."
God woot that worldly joye is sone ago;
And if a rethor coude faire endite,
He in a cronicle saufly mighte it write,
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;
This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
That wommen holde in ful gret reverence.
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.
A colfox, ful of sly iniquitee,
That in the grove hadde woned yeres three,
By heigh imaginacioun forn-cast,
The same night thurghout the hegges brast
Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passed undern of the day,
Waiting his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,

As gladly doon thise homicydes alle
That in await liggen to mordre men.
O false mordrer, lurking in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genilon!
False dissimilour, O Greek Sinon,
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe,
That thou into that yerd fleigh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forwot mot nedes be
After the opinioun of certeyn clerkis.
Witnesse on him that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun
In this matere, and greet disputisoun,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne can not bulte it to the bren,
As can the holy doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardyn,
Whether that Goddes worthy forwiting
Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thing —
Nedely clepe I simple necessitee —
Or elles if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thing, or do it noght,
Though God forwot it, er that it was wroght;
Or if his witing streyneth never a del,
But by necessitee condicionel.
I wol not han to do of swich matere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
That took his counseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that dreem that I you tolde.
"Wommennes counseils been ful ofte colde,"

Wommannes counseil broghte us first to wo,
And made Adam fro paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.
But for I noot, to whom it might displese,
If I counseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
Rede auctours, wher they trete of swich matere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may here.
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I can noon harme of no womman divyne.
Faire in the sond, to bathe hire merily,
Lyth Pertelote, and alle hir sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
Song merrier than the mermayde in the see,
For *Phisiologus* seith sikerly,
How that they singen wel and merily.
And so bifel that as he caste his ye
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
Nothing ne liste him thanne for to crowe,
But cryde anon, "cok, cok," and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte;
For naturelly a beest desyreth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye.
This Chauntecleer, whan he gan him espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, "Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am your freend?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileinye.
I am nat come your counseil for tespye;
But, trewely, the cause of my cominge

Was only for to herkne how that ye singe.
For trewely ye have as mery a stevene
As any aungel hath that is in hevene;
Therwith ye han in musik more felinge
Than hadde Boece, or any that can singe.
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse!),
And eek your moder, of hir gentilesse,
Han in myn hous ybeen, to my gret ese;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But for men speke of singing, I wol seye,
So mote I brouke wel myn eyen tweye,
Save yow, I herde never man so singe,
As dide your fader in the morweninge.
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song;
And for to make his voys the more strong,
He wolde so peyne him, that with both his yen
He moste winke, so loude he wolde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
And eek he was of swich discrecioun
That ther nas no man in no regioun
That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
I have weel rad in daun Burnel the Asse,
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
For that a preestes sone yaf him a knok
Upon his leg, whyl he was yong and nyce,
He made him for to lese his benefice.
But certeyn, ther nis no comparisoun
Bitwix the wisdom and discrecioun
Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
Now singeth, sire, for seynte charitee,
Lat se, conne ye your fader countrefete?"
This Chauntecleer his winges gan to bete,

As man that coude his tresoun nat espye,
So was he ravisshed with his flaterye.
Allas! ye lordes, many a fals flatour
Is in your courtes, and many a losengeour,
That plesen yow wel more, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye;
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.
  This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,
Strecching his nekke, and held his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones;
And daun Russel the fox sterte up at ones,
And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,
And on his bak toward the wode him beer,
For yet ne was ther no man that him sewed.
  O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!
And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
Sin that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy service dide al his poweer,
More for delyt than world to multiplye,
Why woltestow suffre him on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, dere mayster soverayn,
That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deth so sore,
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy lore,
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye? —
For on a Friday soothly slayn was he —
Than wolde I shewe yow how that I coude pleyne
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.
  Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun

Was nevere of ladies maad whan Ilioun
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
Whan he hadde hent king Priam by the berd,
And slayn him, as saith us *Eneydos*,
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte,
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbond hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage —
She was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
And brende hirselven with a stedfast herte.
O woful hennes, right so cryden ye,
As, whan that Nero brende the citee
Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
For that hir housbondes losten alle her lyves,
Withouten gilt — this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wol I torne to my tale agayn,
This sely widwe, and eek hir doghtres two,
Herden thise hennes crye and maken wo,
And out at dores sterten they anoon,
And syen the fox toward the grove goon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
And criden, "Out!" "Harrow!" and "Weylaway!"
"Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him they ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ranne Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
So were they fered for berking of the dogges
And shouting of the men and wommen eke,
They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breke.

They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
So hidous was the noyse, a! *benedicite!*
Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynee,
Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and pouped,
And therwithal they shryked and they houped;
It semed as that hevene sholde falle.
Now, goode men, I pray yow herkneth alle!
Lo, how fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
In al his drede unto the fox he spak,
And seyde, "Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I seyn — as wys God helpe me —
'Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilence upon yow falle!
Now am I come unto this wodes syde,
Maugree your heed, the cok shal heer abyde;
I wol him ete in feith, and that anon.'"
The fox answerde, "In feith, it shal be don" —
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly
This cok brak from his mouth deliverly,
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.
And whan the fox saugh that he was ygon,
"Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, allas!
I have to yow," quod he, "ydoon trespas,
Inasmuche as I maked yow aferd,

Whan I yow hente, and broghte out of the yerd;
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente;
Com doun, and I shal tel yow what I mente.
I shal seye sooth to you, God help me so!"
"Nay, than," quod he, "I shrewe us bothe two,
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.
Thou shalt namore, thurgh thy flaterye
Do me to singe and winken with myn ye.
For he that winketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him never thee!"
"Nay," quod the fox, "but God yeve him meschaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees."
Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees,
And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralitee, good men.
For Seynt Paul seith, that al that writen is,
To our doctryne it is ywrite, ywis.
Taketh the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille.
Now, goode God, if that be thy wille,
As seith my Lord, so make us alle good men,
And bringe us to his heighe blisse. Amen.

Here is ended the Nonne Preestes tale.

THE PARDONER'S TALE

[C. 661–968]

After the Physician has told his tale of the death of Virginia, the Host, exclaiming upon the pity of it, calls upon the Pardoner for a "merry tale," but the company dissent and demand "some moral thing." The Pardoner is quite willing, if he may take thought a moment while he drinks and eats a cake at the neighboring ale-house. He then launches upon a long prologue, in which he unblushingly tells with witty relish how he uses his bulls and relics, and his arts as a preacher, playing upon the superstition of his hearers, to gain from them large profit, for his text is ever, so he says, *Radix malorum est cupiditas*, "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy vi, 10). In his preaching he makes use of "examples many a one of old stories long time agone, for ignorant folk love old tales." One of these he now proposes to tell, "for, though myself be a full vicious man, I can still tell you a moral tale, which I am wont to preach to get my gain." In Flanders, he begins, there was once a company of young folk that gave up their time to folly and all manner of sin. This leads him to moralize for a time upon the evils of drunkenness and gluttony, after which he takes up again the thread of his story of the three revellers, and how they sought for, and found, Death.

THISE ryotoures three, of whiche I telle,
Longe erst er pryme rong of any belle,
Were set hem in a taverne for to drinke;
And as they satte, they herde a belle clinke
Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.
That oon of hem gan callen to his knave,
"Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily,
What cors is this that passeth heer forby;
And look that thou reporte his name wel."
"Sir," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-del.
It was me told, er ye cam heer, two houres.
He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres,
And sodeynly he was yslayn to-night,

For-dronke, as he sat on his bench up-right;
Ther cam a privee theef, men clepeth Deeth,
That in this contree al the peple sleeth,
And with his spere he smoot his herte a-two,
And wente his wey withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence:
And, maister, er ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie.
Beth redy for to mete him evermore;
Thus taughte me my dame, I sey namore."
"By seinte Marie," seyde this taverner,
"The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer,
Henne over a myle, within a greet village,
Both man and womman, child, and hyne, and page.
I trowe his habitacioun be there;
To been avysed greet wisdom it were,
Er that he dide a man a dishonour."
"Ye, Goddes armes," quod this ryotour,
"Is it swich peril with him for to mete?
I shal him seke by wey and eek by strete,
I make avow to Goddes digne bones!
Herkneth, felawes, we three been al ones;
Lat ech of us holde up his hond til other,
And ech of us bicomen otheres brother,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth.
He shal be slayn, which that so many sleeth,
By Goddes dignitee, er it be night."
Togidres han thise three her trouthes plight
To live and dyen ech of hem for other,
As though he were his owene yboren brother.
And up they sterte, al dronken, in this rage,
And forth they goon towardes that village

Of which the taverner had spoke biforn,
And many a grisly ooth than han they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rente,
"Deeth shal be deed, if that they may him hente."
Whan they han goon nat fully half a myle,
Right as they wolde han troden over a style,
An old man and a poure with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And seyde thus, "Now, lordes, God yow see!"
The proudest of thise ryotoures three
Answerde agayn, "What, carl, with sory grace,
Why artow al for-wrapped save thy face?
Why livestow so longe in so greet age?"
This olde man gan loke in his visage,
And seyde thus, "For I ne can nat finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde,
Neither in citee ne in no village,
That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;
And therfore moot I han myn age stille,
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.
Ne deeth, allas! ne wol nat han my lyf;
Thus walke I, lyk a restelees caityf,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,
And seye, 'Leve moder, leet me in!
Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin!
Allas! whan shul my bones been at reste?
Moder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste,
That in my chambre longe tyme hath be,
Ye! for an heyre clout to wrappe me!'
But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,
For which ful pale and welked is my face.
"But, sirs, to yow it is no curteisye

To speken to an old man vileinye,
But he trespasse in worde, or elles in dede.
In Holy Writ ye may yourself wel rede,
'Agayns an old man, hoor upon his head,
Ye sholde aryse;' wherfore I yeve yow reed,
Ne dooth unto an old man noon harm now,
Namore than ye wolde men dide to yow
In age, if that ye so longe abyde;
And God be with yow, wher ye go or ryde.
I moot go thider as I have to go."
"Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shall nat so,"
Seyde this other hasardour anon,
"Thou partest nat so lightly, by seint John!
Thou spak right now of thilke traitour Deeth,
That in this contree alle our frendes sleeth.
Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,
Tel wher he is, or thou shalt it abye,
By God, and by the holy Sacrament!
For soothly thou art oon of his assent,
To sleen us yonge folk, thou false theef!"
"Now, sires," quod he, "if that yow be so leef
To finde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,
For in that grove I lafte him, by my fey,
Under a tree, and ther he wol abyde;
Nat for your boost he wol him nothing hyde.
See ye that ook? Right ther ye shul him finde.
God save yow, that boghte agayn mankinde,
And yow amende!" Thus seyde this olde man.
And everich of thise ryotoures ran,
Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde
Of florins fyne of golde ycoyned rounde
Wel ny a seven busshels, as hem thoughte.
Ne lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte,

But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,
For that the florins been so faire and brighte,
That doun they sette hem by this precious hord.
The worste of hem he spake the firste word.
"Brethren," quod he, "tak kepe what I seye;
My wit is greet, thought that I bourde and pleye,
This tresor hath fortune unto us yiven,
In mirthe and jolitee our lyf to liven,
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende,
Ey! Goddes precious dignitee! who wende
To-day that we sholde han so fair a grace?
But mighte this gold be caried fro this place
Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youres —
For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures —
Than were we in heigh felicitee.
But trewely, by daye it may nat be;
Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,
And for our owene tresor doon us honge.
This tresor moste ycaried be by nighte
As wysly and as slyly as it mighte,
Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle
Be drawe, and lat see wher the cut wol falle,
And he that hath the cut with herte blythe
Shal renne to the toune, and that ful swythe,
And bringe us breed and wyn ful prively,
And two of us shul kepen subtilly
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie,
Whan it is night, we wol this tresor carie
By oon assent, wher as us thinketh best."
That oon of hem the cut broughte in his fest,
And bad hem drawe, and loke wher it wol falle;
And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,
And forth toward the toun he wente anon.

And also sone as that he was gon,
That oon of hem spak thus unto that other,
"Thou knowest wel thou art my sworne brother,
Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.
Thou woost wel that our felawe is agon;
And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,
That shal departed been among us three,
But natheles, if I can shape it so
That it departed were among us two,
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?"
That othere answerde, "I noot how that may be;
He woot how that the gold is with us tweye;
What shal we doon, what shal we to him seye?"
"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firste shrewe,
"And I shal tellen, in a wordes fewe,
What we shal doon, and bringen it wel aboute."
"I graunte," quod that other, "out of doute,
That by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biwreye."
"Now," quod the firste, "thou woost wel we be tweye,
And two of us shul strenger be than oon.
Look whan that he is set, and right anoon
Arys, as though thou woldest with him pleye,
And I shal ryve him thurgh the sydes tweye,
Whyl that thou strogelest with him as in game,
And with thy dagger look thou do the same.
And thanne shal al this gold departed be,
My dere freend, bitwixen me and thee;
Thanne may we bothe our lustes al fulfille,
And pleye at dees right at our owene wille."
And thus acorded been thise shrewes tweye
To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.
This yongest, which that wente unto the toun,
Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and doun

The beautee of thise florins newe and brighte.
"O Lord!" quod he, "if so were that I mighte
Have al this tresor to myself allone,
Ther is no man that liveth under the trone
Of God, that sholde live so mery as I!"
And atte laste the feend, our enemy,
Putte in his thought that he shold poyson beye,
With which he mighte sleen his felawes tweye;
For-why the feend fond him in swich lyvinge,
That he had leve him to sorwe bringe,
For this was outrely his fulle entente
To sleen hem bothe, and never to repente.
And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,
And preyde him, that he him wolde selle
Som poyson, that he mighte his rattes quelle,
And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,
That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde yslawe,
And fayn he wolde wreke him, if he mighte,
On vermin, that destroyed him by nighte.
The pothecarie answerde, "And thou shalt have
A thing that, also God my soule save,
In al this world ther nis no creature,
That ete or dronke hath of this confiture
Noght but the mountance of a corn of whete,
That he ne shal his lyf anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse whyle
Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a myle;
This poyson is so strong and violent."
This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poyson in a box, and sith he ran
Into the nexte strete, unto a man,
And borwed him large botels three;

And in the two his poyson poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his owene drinke.
For al the night he shoop him for to swinke
In caryinge of the gold out of that place.
And whan this ryotour, with sory grace,
Had filled with wyn his grete botels three,
To his felawes agayn repaireth he.
What nedeth it to sermone of it more?
For right as they had cast his deeth bifore,
Right so they han him slayn, and that anon.
And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon,
"Now lat us sitte and drinke, and make us merie,
And afterward we wol his body berie."
And with that word it happed him, par cas,
To take the botel ther the poyson was,
And drank, and yaf his felawe drinke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.
But, certes, I suppose that Avicen
Wroot never in no canon, ne in no fen,
Mo wonder signes of empoisoning
Than hadde thise wrecches two, er hir ending.
Thus ended been thise homicydes two,
And eek the false empoysoner also.

O cursed sinne, ful of cursednesse!
O traytours homicyde, o wikkednesse!
O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileinye
And othes grete, of usage and of pryde!
Allas! mankinde, how may it bityde,
That to thy Creatour which that thee wroghte,
And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte,
Thou art so fals and so unkinde, allas!

Now, goode men, God foryeve yow your trespas,
And ware yow fro the sinne of avaryce.
Myn holy pardoun may yow alle waryce,
So that ye offre nobles or sterlinges,
Or elles silver broches, spoones, ringes.
Boweth your heed under this holy bulle!
Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of your wolle!
Your name I entre heer in my rolle anon;
Into the blisse of hevene shul ye gon;
I yow assoile, by myn heigh power,
Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer
As ye were born; and, lo, sires, thus I preche,
And Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche,
So graunte yow his pardon to receyve;
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.
But sires, o word forgat I in my tale,
I have relikes and pardon in my male,
As faire as any man in Engelond,
Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond,
If any of yow wol, of devocioun,
Offren, and han myn absolucioun,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth heer adoun,
And mekely receyveth my pardoun:
Or elles, taketh pardon as ye wende,
Al newe and fresh, at every myles ende,
So that ye offren alwey newe and newe
Nobles and pens, which that be gode and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is heer
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer
Tassoille yow in contree as ye ryde,
For aventures which that may bityde.
Peraventure ther may fallen oon or two
Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke atwo.

Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle
That I am in your felaweship yfalle,
That may assoille yow, bothe more and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that oure Hoste heer shal biginne,
For he is most envoluped in sinne,
Com forth, sir Hoste, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse my reliks everichon, —
Ye, for a grote, — unbokel anon thy purs!

THE HOUSE OF FAME

[See the preface to the notes on this poem.]

Book I

"God turn every dream to our good!" begins the poet. For some sixty lines he comments on the marvelous nature of dreams, and runs over the various causes suggested for them, though disclaiming any intention of treating the subject adequately — which, he says, may better be left for others who know more about it. His purpose is to tell of a wonderful dream which came to him on the tenth of December. A formal invocation follows addressed to the god of sleep, in the course of which he calls down appropriate blessings and curses upon those who listen to his dream in proper spirit and those who judge it amiss.

In his dream, he says, he found himself in a temple made of glass, adorned with the utmost skill. Upon the wall, among other things, he saw depicted the story of Æneas of Troy. This story he tells in brief, recounting the adventures of the hero until his arrival in Italy and marriage with Lavinia, and pausing, in speaking of Dido, to enumerate other heroes who, like Æneas, were faithless in love. This story forms the greater part of the first book. At its close, the poet tells how he went out of the temple to find some one who may tell him in what country he may be. Here the adventures, which are the chief theme of the poem, begin:

When I out at the dores cam,
I faste aboute me beheld.
Then saw I but a large feld,
As fer as ever I mighte see,
Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,
Or bush, or gras, or ered lond;
For al the feld nas but of sond
As smal as man may see yet lye
In the desert of Libye;
Ne I no maner creature,
That is yformed by nature,

Ne saw, me [for] to rede or wisse.
"O Crist," thoughte I, "that art in blisse,
Fro fantom and illusioun
Me save!" and with devocioun
Myn yen to the heven I caste.
Tho was I war, lo! at the laste,
That faste by the sonne, as hye
As kenne mighte I with myn ye,
Me thoughte I saw an egle sore,
But that hit semed moche more
Then I had any egle seyn.
But this as sooth as deeth, certeyn,
Hit was of golde, and shoon so brighte,
That never saw men such a sighte,
But if the heven hadde ywonne
Al newe of golde another sonne;
So shoon the egles fethres brighte,
And somwhat dounward gan hit lighte.

Explicit liber primus.

Book II

Incipit liber secundus.

Proem

Now herkneth, every maner man
That English understonde can,
And listeth of my dreem to lere;
For now at erste shul ye here
So selly an avisioun,
That Isaye, ne Scipioun,
Ne king Nabugodonosor,
Pharo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,
Ne mette swich a dreem as this!

Now faire blisful, O Cipris,
So be my favour at this tyme!
And ye, me to endyte and ryme
Helpeth, that on Parnaso dwelle
By Elicon the clere dwelle.
O Thought, that wroot al that I mette,
And in the tresorie hit shette
Of my brayn, now shal men see
If any vertu in thee be,
To tellen al my dreem aright;
Now kythe thyn engyn and might!

THE DREAM

This egle, of which I have yow told,
That shoon with fethres alle of gold,
Which that so hye gan to sore,
I gan beholde more and more,
To see hir beautee and the wonder;
But never was ther dint of thonder,
Ne that thing that men calle foudre,
That smyteth sone a tour to poudre,
And in his swifte coming brende,
That so swythe gan descende,
As this foul, whan hit behelde
That I a-roume was in the felde;
And with his grimme pawes stronge,
Within his sharpe nayles longe,
Me, fleinge, at a swappe he hente,
And with his sours agayn up wente,
Me caryinge in his clawes starke
As lightly as I were a larke,
How high, I can not telle yow,
For I cam up, I niste how.

For so astonied and a-sweved
Was every vertu in my heved,
What with his sours and with my drede,
That al my feling gan to dede;
For-why hit was to greet affray.
  Thus I longe in his clawes lay,
Til at the laste he to me spak
In mannes vois, and seyde, "Awak!
And be not so a-gast, for shame!"
And called me tho by my name.
And, for I sholde the bet abreyde,
Me mette "Awak," to me he seyde,
Right in the same vois and stevene
That useth oon I coude nevene;
And with that vois, soth for to sayn,
My minde cam to me agayn;
For hif was goodly seyd to me,
So nas hit never wont to be.
  And herwithal I gan to stere,
And he me in his feet to bere,
Til that he felte that I had hete,
And felte eek tho myn herte bete.
And tho gan he me to disporte,
And with wordes to comforte,
And sayde twyes, "Seynte Marie!
Thou art noyous for to carie,
And nothing nedeth hit, pardee!
For also wis God helpe me
As thou non harm shalt have of this,
And this cas, that betid thee is,
Is for thy lore and for thy prow.
Let see! darst thou yet loke now?
Be ful assured, boldely,

I am thy frend." And therwith I
Gan for to wondren in my minde.
"O God," thoughte I, "that madest kinde,
Shal I non other weyes dye?
Wher Joves wol me stellifye,
Or what thing may this signifye?
I neither am Enok, ne Elye,
Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede
That was ybore up, as men rede,
To hevene with dan Jupiter,
And maad the goddes boteler."
Lo! this was tho my fantasye!
But he that bar me gan espye
That I so thoghte, and seyde this,
"Thou demest of thyself amis;
For Joves is not ther-aboute —
I dar wel putte thee out of doute —
To make of thee as yet a sterre.
But er I bere thee moche ferre,
I wol thee telle what I am,
And whider thou shalt, and why I cam
To done this, so that thou take
Good herte, and not for fere quake."
"Gladly," quod I. "Now wel," quod he: —
"First I, that in my feet have thee,
Of which thou hast a feer and wonder,
Am dwelling with the god of thonder,
Which that men callen Jupiter,
That dooth me flee ful ofte fer
To do al his comaundement.
And for this cause he hath me sent
To thee. Now herke, by thy trouthe!
Certeyn, he hath of thee routhe,

That thou so longe trewely
Hast served so ententifly
His blinde nevew Cupido,
And fair Venus [goddesse] also,
Withoute guerdoun ever yit,
And nevertheles hast set thy wit
(Although that in thy hede ful lyte is)
To make bokes, songes, dytees,
In ryme, or elles in cadence,
As thou best canst, in reverence
Of Love, and of his servants eke,
That have his servise sogh̄t, and seke;
And peynest thee to preyse his art,
Althogh thou haddest never part;
Wherfor, also God me blesse,
Joves halt hit greet humblesse
And vertu eek, that thou wolt make
A-night ful ofte thyn heed to ake,
In thy studie so thou wrytest,
And evermo of love endytest,
In honour of him and preysinges,
And in his folkes furtheringes,
And in hir matere al devysest,
And noght him nor his folk despysest,
Although thou mayst go in the daunce
Of hem that him list not avaunce.

"Wherfor, as I seyde, ywis,
Jupiter considereth this,
And also, beau sir, other thinges;
That is, that thou hast no tydinges
Of Loves folk, if they be glade,
Ne of noght elles that God made;
And noght only fro fer contree

That ther no tyding comth to thee,
But of thy verray neyghebores,
That dwellen almost at thy dores,
Thou herest neither that ne this;
For whan thy labour doon all is,
And hast ymaad thy rekeninges,
In stede of reste and newe thinges,
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon;
And, also domb as any stoon,
Thou sittest at another boke,
Til fully daswed is thy loke,
And livest thus as an heremyte,
Although thyn abstinence is lyte.
"And therfor Joves, through his grace,
Wol that I bere thee to a place,
Which that hight the Hous of Fame,
To do thee som disport and game,
In som recompensacioun
Of labour and devocioun
That thou hast had, lo! causeles,
To Cupido, the reccheles!
And thus this god, thorgh his meryte,
Wol with som maner thing thee quyte,
So that thou wolt be of good chere.
For truste wel, that thou shalt here,
When we be comen ther I seye,
Mo wonder thinges, dar I leye,
Of Loves folke mo tydinges,
Bothe soth sawes and lesinges;
And mo loves newe begonne,
And longe yserved loves wonne,
And mo loves casuelly
That been betid, no man wot why,

But 'as a blind man stert an hare;'
And more jolytee and fare,
Whyl that they finden love of stele,
As thinketh hem, and over-al wele;
Mo discords, and mo jelousyes,
Mo murmurs, and mo novelryes,
And mo dissimulaciouns,
And feyned reparaciouns;
And mo berdes in two houres
Withoute rasour or sisoures
Ymaad, then greynes be of sondes;
And eke mo holdinge in hondes,
And also mo renovelaunces
Of olde for-leten aqueyntaunces;
Mo love-dayes and acordes
Then on instruments been cordes;
And eke of loves mo eschaunges
Than ever cornes were in graunges;
Unethe maistow trowen this?"
Quod he. "No, helpe me God so wis!"
Quod I. "No? why?" quod he. "For hit
Were impossible, to my wit,
Though that Fame hadde al the pyes
In al a realme, and al the spyes,
How that yet she shulde here al this,
Or they espye hit." "O yis, yis!"
Quod he to me, "that can I preve
By resoun, worthy for to leve,
So that thou yeve thyn advertence
To understonde my sentence.
"First shalt thou heren wher she dwelleth,
And so thyn owne book hit telleth;
Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,

Right even in middes of the weye
Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;
That, whatsoever in al these three
Is spoken, in privee or aperte,
The wey therto is so overte,
And stant eek in so juste a place,
That every soun mot to hit pace,
Or what so comth fro any tonge,
Be hit rouned, red, or songe,
Or spoke in seurtee or drede,
Certein, hit moste thider nede.
"Now herkne wel; for-why I wille
Tellen thee a propre skile,
And a worthy demonstracioun
In myn imagynacioun.
"Geffrey, thou wost right wel this,
That every kindly thing that is,
Hath a kindly stede ther he
May best in hit conserved be;
Unto which place every thing,
Through his kindly enclyning,
Moveth for to comen to,
Whan that hit is awey therfro;
As thus, lo, thou mayst al day see
That any thing that hevy be,
As stoon or leed, or thing of wighte,
And ber hit never so hye on highte,
Lat go thyn hand, hit falleth doun.
"Right so seye I by fyre or soun,
Or smoke, or other thinges lighte,
Alwey they seke upward on highte;
Whyl ech of hem is at his large,
Light thing up, and dounward charge.

"And for this cause mayst thou see,
That every river to the see
Enclyned is to go, by kinde.
And by these skilles, as I finde,
Hath fish dwellinge in floode and see,
And trees eek in erthe be.
Thus every thing, by this resoun,
Hath his propre mansioun,
To which hit seketh to repaire,
As ther hit shulde not apaire.
Lo, this sentence is knowen couthe
Of every philosophres mouthe,
As Aristotle and dan Platon,
And other clerkes many oon;
And to confirme my resoun,
Thou wost wel this, that speche is soun,
Or elles no man mighte hit here;
Now herke what I wol thee lere.
"Soun is noght but air ybroken,
And every speche that is spoken,
Loud or privee, foul or fair,
In his substaunce is but air;
For as flaumbe is but lighted smoke,
Right so soun is air ybroke.
But this may be in many wyse,
Of which I wil thee two devyse,
As soun that comth of pype or harpe.
For whan a pype is blowen sharpe,
The air is twist with violence,
And rent; lo, this is my sentence;
Eek, whan men harpe-stringes smyte,
Whether hit be moche or lyte,
Lo, with the strook the air to-breketh;

Right so hit breketh whan men speketh.
Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche.
"Now hennesforth I wol thee teche,
How every speche or noise, or soun,
Through his multiplicacioun,
Thogh hit were pyped of a mouse,
Moot nede come to Fames House.
I preve hit thus — tak hede now —
By experience; for if that thou
Throwe on water now a stoon,
Wel wost thou, hit wol make anoon
A litel roundel as a cercle,
Paraventure brood as a covercle;
And right anoon thou shalt see weel,
That wheel wol cause another wheel,
And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
Every cercle causing other,
Wyder than himselve was;
And thus, fro roundel to compas,
Ech aboute other goinge,
Caused of otheres steringe,
And multiplying ever-mo,
Til that hit be so fer ygo
That hit at bothe brinkes be.
Al-thogh thou mowe hit not ysee
Above, hit goth yet alway under,
Although thou thenke hit a gret wonder.
And whoso seith of trouthe I varie,
Bid him proven the contrarie.
And right thus every word, ywis,
That loude or privee spoken is,
Moveth first an air aboute,
And of this moving, out of doute,

Another air anoon is meved,
As I have of the water preved,
That every cercle causeth other.
Right so of air, my leve brother;
Everich air in other stereth
More and more, and speche up bereth,
Or vois, or noise, or word, or soun,
Ay through multiplicacioun,
Til hit be atte House of Fame —
Tak hit in ernest or in game.
" Now have I told, if thou have minde,
How speche or soun, of pure kinde,
Enclyned is upward to meve;
This, mayst thou fele, wel I preve.
And that the mansioun, ywis,
That everything enclyned to is,
Hath his kindeliche stede:
That sheweth hit, withouten drede,
That kindely the mansioun
Of every speche, of every soun,
Be hit either foul or fair,
Hath his kinde place in air.
And sin that everything, that is
Out of his kinde place, ywis,
Moveth thider for to go
If hit a-weye be therfro,
As I before have preved thee,
Hit seweth, every soun, pardee,
Moveth kindely to pace
Al up into his kindely place.
And this place of which I telle,
Ther as Fame list to dwelle,
Is set amiddes of these three,

Heven, erthe, and eek the see,
As most conservatif the soun.
Than is this the conclusioun,
That every speche of every man
As I thee telle first began,
Moveth up on high to pace
Kindely to Fames place.
"Telle me this feithfully,
Have I not preved thus simply,
Withouten any subtiltee
Of speche, or gret prolixitee
Of termes of philosophye,
Of figures of poetrye,
Or colours of rethoryke?
Pardee, hit oghte thee to lyke;
For hard langage and hard matere
Is encombrous for to here
At ones; wost thou not wel this?"
And I answerde, and seyde, "Yis."
"A ha!" quod he, "lo, so I can
Lewedly to a lewed man
Speke, and shewe him swiche skiles,
That he may shake hem by the biles,
So palpable they shulden be.
But tel me this, now pray I thee,
How thinketh thee my conclusioun?"
[Quod he]. "A good persuasioun,"
Quod I, "hit is; and lyk to be
Right so as thou hast preved me."
"By God," quod he, "and as I leve,
Thou shalt have yit, or hit be eve,
Of every word of this sentence
A preve, by experience;

And with thyn eres heren wel
Top and tail, and everydel,
That every word that spoken is
Comth into Fames Hous, ywis,
As I have seyd; what wilt thou more?"
And with this word upper to sore
He gan, and seyde, "By Seynt Jame!
Now wil we speken al of game.
"How farest thou?" quod he to me.
"Wel," quod I. "Now see," quod he,
"By thy trouthe, yond adoun,
Wher that thou knowest any toun,
Or hous, or any other thing.
And whan thou hast of ought knowing,
Loke that thou warne me,
And I anoon shal telle thee
How fer that thou art now therfro."
And I adoun gan loken tho,
And beheld feldes and plaines,
And now hilles, and now mountaines,
Now valeys, and now forestes,
And now, unethes, grete bestes;
Now riveres, now citees,
Now tounes, and now grete trees,
Now shippes sailinge in the see.
But thus sone in a whyle he
Was flowen fro the grounde so hye,
That al the world, as to myn ye,
No more semed than a prikke;
Or elles was the air so thikke
That I ne mighte not discerne.
With that he spak to me as yerne,
And seyde, "Seestow any toun

Or ought thou knowest yonder doun?"
I seyde, "Nay." "No wonder nis,"
Quod he, "for half so high as this
Nas Alexander Macedo,
Ne the king, dan Scipio,
That saw in dreme, at point devys,
Helle and erthe, and paradys;
No eek the wrecche Dedalus,
Ne his child, nyce Icarus,
That fleigh so highe that the hete
His winges malt, and he fel wete
In-mid the see, and ther he dreynte,
For whom was maked moch compleynte.
"Now turn upward," quod he, "thy face,
And behold this large place,
This air; but loke thou ne be
Adrad of hem that thou shalt see;
For in this regioun, certain,
Dwelleth many a citezein,
Of which that speketh dan Plato.
These ben the eyrish bestes, lo!"
And so saw I al that meynee
Bothe goon and also flee.
"Now," quod he tho, "cast up thyn ye;
See yonder, lo, the Galaxye,
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey,
For hit is whyt, and somme, parfey,
Callen hit Watlinge Strete,
That ones was ybrent with hete,
Whan the sonnes sone, the rede,
That highte Pheton, wolde lede
Algate his fader cart, and gye.
The cart-hors gonne wel espye

That he coude no governaunce,
And gonne for to lepe and launce,
And beren him now up, now doun,
Til that he saw the Scorpioun,
Which that in heven a signe is yit.
And he, for ferde, loste his wit,
Of that, and leet the reynes goon
Of his hors; and they anoon
Gonne up to mounte, and doun descende
Til bothe eyr and erthe brende;
Til Jupiter, lo, atte laste,
Him slow, and fro the carte caste.
Lo, is it not a greet mischaunce,
To lete a fole han governaunce
Of thing that he can not demeine!"
And with this word, soth for to seyne,
He gan alway upper to sore,
And gladded me ay more and more,
So feithfully to me spak he.
Tho gan I loken under me,
And beheld the eyrish bestes,
Cloudes, mistes, and tempestes,
Snowes, hailes, reines, windes,
And thengendring in hir kindes,
And al the wey through whiche I cam;
"O God," quod I, "that made Adam,
Moche is thy might and thy noblesse!"
And tho thoughte I upon Boece,
That writ, "a thought may flee so hye,
With fetheres of Philosophye,
To passen everich element;
And whan he hath so fer y-went,
Than may be seen, behind his bak,

Cloud, and al that I of spak."
Tho gan I wexen in a were,
And seyde, "I woot wel I am here;
But wher in body or in gost
I noot, ywis; but God, thou wost!"
For more cleer entendement
Nadde he me never yit ysent.
And than thoughte I on Marcian,
And eek on Anteclaudian,
That sooth was hir descripcioun
Of al the hevenes regioun,
As fer as that I saw the preve;
Therfor I can hem now beleve.
With that this egle gan to crye:
"Lat be," quod he, "thy fantasye;
Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?"
"Nay, certeinly," quod I, "right naught."
"And why?" "For I am now to old."
"Elles wolde I thee have told,"
Quod he, "the sterres names, lo,
And al the hevenes signes to,
And which they been." "No fors," quod I.
"Yis, pardee," quod he, "wostow why?
For whan thou redest poetrye,
How goddes gonne stellifye
Brid, fish, beste, or him or here,
As the Raven, or either Bere,
Or Ariones harpe fyn,
Castor, Pollux, or Delphyn,
Or Athalantes doughtres sevene,
How alle these arn set in hevene;
For though thou have hem ofte on honde,
Yet nostow not wher that they stonde."

"No fors," quod I, "hit is no nede.
I leve as wel, so God me spede,
Hem that wryte of this matere,
As though I knew hir places here;
And eek they shynen here so brighte,
Hit shulde shenden al my sighte,
To loke on hem." "That may wel be,"
Quod he. And so forth bar he me
A whyl, and than he gan to crye,
That never herde I thing so hye,
"Now up the heed, for al is wel.
Seynt Julyan, lo, bon hostel!
See here the House of Fame, lo!
Maistow not heren that I do?"
"What?" quod I. "The grete soun,"
Quod he, "that rumbleth up and doun
In Fames Hous, ful of tydinges,
Bothe of fair speche and chydinges,
And of fals and soth compouned.
Herkne wel; hit is not rouned.
Herestow not the grete swogh?"
"Yis, pardee," quod I, "wel y-nogh."
"And what soun is it lyk?" quod he.
"Peter! lyk beting of the see,"
Quod I, "again the roches holowe,
Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe;
And lat a man stonde, out of doute,
A myle thens, and here hit route;
Or elles lyk the last humblinge
After the clappe of a thundringe,
When Joves hath the air ybete;
But hit doth me for fere swete."
"Nay, dred thee not therof," quod he,

"Hit is nothing wil beten thee;
Thou shalt non harm have, trewely."
And with this word bothe he and I
As nigh the place arryved were
As men may casten with a spere.
I niste how, but in a strete
He sette me faire on my fete,
And seyde, "Walke forth a pas,
And tak thyn aventure or cas,
That thou shalt finde in Fames place."
"Now," quod I, "whyl we han space
To speke, or that I go fro thee,
For the love of God tell me,
In sooth, that wil I of thee lere,
If this noise that I here
Be, as I have herd thee tellen,
Of folk that doun in erthe dwellen,
And comth here in the same wyse
As I thee herde or this devyse;
And that ther lyves body nis
In al that hous that yonder is,
That maketh al this loude fare?"
"No," quod he, "by Seynte Clare!
And, also wis God rede me,
But o thinge I wil warne thee
Of the which thou wolt have wonder.
Lo, to the House of Fame yonder
Thou wost now how cometh every speche,
Hit nedeth noght eft thee to teche.
But understond now right wel this;
Whan any speche ycomen is
Up to the paleys, anon-right
Hit wexeth lyk the same wight

Which that the word in erthe spak,
Be hit clothed reed or blak;
And hath so verray his lyknesse
That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse
That hit the same body be,
Man or woman, he or she.
And is not this a wonder thing?"
"Yis," quod I tho, "by hevene king!"
And with this worde, "Farwel," quod he,
"And here I wol abyden thee;
And God of hevene sende thee grace,
Som good to lernen in this place."
And I of him took leve anoon,
And gan forth to the paleys goon.

Explicit liber secundus.

Book III

The invocation prefixed to this book is to the "god of knowledge and of light," Apollo. The poet then describes how he approached the House of Fame, and found the high hill, upon which it stood, not of glass, as he at first thought, but of ice. On the side of the hill were engraved the names of famous folk, but of these he could hardly read more than a few letters, so much had they melted away in the sun, even as their fame had melted away on earth. On the other, or northward, side of the hill, however, in the shade, the names were as fresh and clear as the day they were written.

The House of Fame was of exceeding beauty, made, despite its elaborate architecture, of beryl, all of one piece. In niches upon its pinnacles were many minstrels and tellers of tales, on whom the fame of men depends, the greater above, the lesser below, imitating the greater singers above them. Also, apart from these, there was a multitude of musicians, and yet again of jugglers, magicians, witches, astrologers, and alchemists.

Entering the palace, the poet met heralds, crying for largess from those who would have fame. He entered the huge hall, every part of which was plated half a foot thick with gold, and saw sitting on a throne made of a single ruby or carbuncle, the Lady Fame. She was strange to see, for at first he thought her only a cubit long, and then in a moment she was so great

that, with her feet on the earth, her head touched heaven; her eyes were as many as there are feathers on birds; her hair was like burned gold, wavy and curled; she had as many ears and tongues as there are hairs on beasts, and on her feet grew wings. About her sounded ever heavenly melody in her praise. On her shoulders she bore all those that have large fame, such as Alexander and Hercules. On either side of the hall, ranged from the dais to the door, the greater historians and poets stood, upon pillars made of metals appropriate to their themes — Josephus upon a pillar of lead and iron; Statius upon an iron pillar painted with tiger's blood; Homer on a pillar of iron, the metal of Mars; Virgil on a pillar of tinned iron; Ovid, Venus' clerk, upon a pillar of copper; Claudian, that sang of hell, upon a pillar of sulphur; and with these many others.

Then the poet heard a noise like bees when they swarm, and saw a multitude of people of every kind and condition prostrating themselves before Lady Fame, and begging her to grant them her gift of renown throughout the world. To one she would give it; to another, refuse it; to some who asked good fame, she gave neither good or evil fame — following no law or reason in granting or refusing, and now bidding her herald, Eolus, to blow his trumpet of Clear Praise, now his foul trumpet of Slander, as her idle whim at the moment dictated.

As the poet watched company after company approach and receive their dismissal with their petitions granted or refused, a man who stood behind him asked if he had come in search of fame. He replied that he had not, that he had been brought hither to hear tidings of love and other new and pleasant things. Thereupon the man took him without the palace to a valley near by, where he saw a house sixty miles long, made of woven twigs, that spun about on its center continually with a swift motion. What with the humming as it turned, and what with other noises, the house was full of sounds, for, being made of wickerwork, it was full of holes that permitted every sort of rumor and tidings uttered on earth to pass into it, or from within to pass out. Into it passed rumors with regard to every conceivable thing — rumors of war, peace, death, life, love, hate, agreement, strife, health, sickness, fair winds, tempests, plenty, famine, fire, accident. As the poet pondered this marvel, he saw his eagle perched upon a stone, and besought that he might be permitted to enter. The eagle gave consent, and bore him into the whirling house through a window, for that, it seemed, had been Jove's command. Within, the poet saw a numberless throng of people, each whispering continually or telling openly to his neighbor some new report or gossip, which was no sooner uttered than it was passed on immediately to another, and so ever increased more and more. And when a report had thus grown far beyond what it was when it started, it would seek an opening and pass out.

Sometimes a lying and a true rumor would try to get out by the same opening, and, after struggling with each other, would agree to pass out together, and so would fly off, false and true commingled. When the rumors had passed out, they went to Lady Fame, and she gave them each their name and the length of time they should last on earth.

Throughout this multitude the poet went, listening to all manner of tidings, true and false, as they were bruited about and increased in the telling. Of a sudden, he heard a great noise in the corner of the hall where men told tidings of love. Every one hastened hither, and there the poet saw a man whom, he says, he cannot name,

> "But he seemed for to be
> A man of great authority . . ."

With these words the poem comes to an end, unfinished.

A TRETIS OF THE ASTROLABIE

Prologus

Litell Lowis, my sone, I have perceived wel by certeyne evidences thyn abilite to lerne sciencez touchinge noumbres and proporciouns, and as wel considere I thy bisy preyere in special to lerne the Tretis of the Astrolabie. Than, for-as-mechel as a philosofre seith,[1] "He wrappeth him in his frend, that condescendeth to the rightful preyers of his frend," therfor have I geven thee a suffisaunt[2] astrolabie as for oure orizonte, compowned after the latitude of Oxenford, upon which, by mediacion of this litel tretis, I purpose to teche thee a certein nombre of conclusions apertening to the same instrument. I seye a certein of conclusiouns for three causes. The furste cause is this — truste wel that alle the conclusiouns that han ben founde, or elles possibly mighten be founde, in so noble an instrument as an astrolabie, ben unknowe perfitly to any mortal man in this regioun, as I suppose. Another cause is this, that sothly, in any tretis of the astrolabie that I have seyn, there ben some conclusions that wole nat in alle thinges performen hir behestes; and some of hem ben to harde to thy tendre age of ten yeer to conseyve. This tretis, divided in fyve parties,[3] wole I shewe thee under ful lighte rewles and naked wordes in English, for Latin ne canstow yit but smal, my lyte sone. But, natheles, suffyse to thee thise trewe conclusiouns in English, as wel as suffyseth to thise noble clerkes Grekes thise same conclusiouns in Greek, and to Arabiens in Arabik, and to Jewes in Ebrew, and to the Latin folk in Latin; whiche Latin folk han hem furst out of othre diverse langages, and writen in hir owne tonge, that is to sein, in Latin. And God wot that in alle thise

langages, and in many mo, han thise conclusiouns ben suffisantly lerned and taught, and yit by diverse rewles, right as diverse pathes leden diverse folk the righte wey to Rome. Now wol I prey meekly every discret persone that redeth or hereth this litel tresis, to have my rewde endyting for excused, and my superfluite of wordes, for two causes. The firste cause is for that curious endyting and hard sentence is ful hevy atones for swich a child to lerne. And the second cause is this, that sothly me semeth betre to wryten unto a child twyes a good sentence than he forgete it ones. And, Lowis, yif so be that I shewe thee in my lighte English as trewe conclusiouns touching this matere, and naught only as trewe, but as many, and as subtil, conclusiouns, as ben shewed in Latin in any commune tretis of the astrolabie, con me the more thank, and preye God save the King, that is lord of this langage, and alle that him feyth bereth and obeyeth, everech in his degree, the more and the lasse. But considere wel that I ne usurpe nat to have founde this werk of my labour or of myn engin. I nam but a lewd campilatour of the labour of olde astrologiens, and have hit translated in myn English only for thy doctrine; and with this swerd shal I sleen envye.

CHAUCER'S WORDS UNTO ADAM HIS OWEN SCRYVEYNE

Adam Scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle
Boece or *Troylus* for to wryten newe,
Under thy long lokkes thowe most have the scalle,
But after my making thowe wryte more trewe,
So ofte a daye I mot thy werk renewe,
Hit to corecte, and eke to rubbe and scrape;
And al is through thy necgligence and rape.

TO ROSEMOUNDE: A BALADE

MADAME, ye ben of al beaute shryne,
As far as cercled is the mappemounde,
For as the cristal glorious ye shyne,
And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.
Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde,
That at a revel, whan that I see you daunce,
It is an oynement unto my wounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,
Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde.
Your seemly voys that ye so smal out-twyne
Maketh my thoght in joye and blis habounde.
So curteisly I go, with love bounde,
That to myself I sey, in my penaunce,
Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Nas never pyk walwed in galauntyne,
As I in love am walwed and ywounde.
For which ful ofte I of myself divyne
That I am trewe Tristam the secounde.
My love may not refreyd be nor a-founde;
I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.
Do what you list, I wil your thral be founde
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

THE COMPLEINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS EMPTY PURSE

To you, my purse, and to non other wight
  Compleyne I, for ye be my lady dere!
I am so sory, now that ye be light;
  For, certes, but ye make me hevy chere,
  Me were as leef be leyd upon my bere;
    For whiche unto your mercy thus I crye,
    Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now voucheth sauf this day, or hit be night,
  That I of you the blisful soun may here,
Or see your colour lyk the sonne bright,
  That of yellownesse hadde never pere.
  Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,
    Quene of comfort, and of good companye;
    Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now, purs, that be to me my lyves light,
  And saveour, as doun in this worlde here,
Out of this toune help me through your might,
  Sin that ye wole nat been my tresorere,
  For I am shave as nye as any frere.
    But yit I pray unto your curtesye,
    Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye.

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour of Brutes Albioun!
Which that, by lyne and free eleccioun,
  Ben verray king, this song to you I sende;
  And ye, that mowen al myn harm amende,
Have minde upon my supplicacioun!

TRUTH

Balade de Bon Conseyl

Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse,
  Suffyce unto thy good, though hit be smal;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,
  Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal;
  Savour no more than thee bihove shal;
    Werk wel thyself, that other folk canst rede;
    And trouthe shall delivere, hit is no drede.

Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse,
  In trust of hir that turneth as a bal;
Gret reste stant in litel besinesse;
  Beth war therfore to sporne ageyn an al;
  Stryve noght, as doth the crokke with the wal;
    Daunte thyself, that dauntest otheres dede;
    And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;
  The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
Her nis non hoom, her nis but wildernesse.
  Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth beste, out of thy stal!
  Know thy contree; look up, thank God of al;
    Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost thee lede;
    And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Envoy

Therfore, thou vache, leve thyn old wrecchednesse
  Unto the worlde; leve now to be thral;
Crye him mercy that of his hy goodnesse
  Made thee of noght, and in especial
  Draw unto him, and pray in general
    For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede;
    And trouthe shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Explicit Le bon counseill de G. Chaucer.

NOTES

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

[A. 1–858]

[In these Notes, as already said in the Preface to this volume, the aim has been to confine comment to what is essential and broadly illustrative, and to keep away from what is narrowly curious or erudite. The student must bear this in mind when, for example, he finds books referred to which are unfamiliar, and knowledge of which, in themselves, may be, either now or at any time, of little value to him. It is of no consequence that he should remember that Chaucer drew a particular passage from this or that book, unless the fact should interest him for some special reason; the important thing is for him to gain an impression of the scope of Chaucer's reading and his use of authorities. Likewise, comments upon the forms of words and upon grammatical points are admitted only when broadly useful; see, for an example, the first note below.

Cross references to the *Canterbury Tales* are by group and line (see the Introduction, p. xxix ff.), to the *House of Fame*, under the abbreviation HF.

For general comment upon the *Prologue*, see the Introduction, pp. vii–ix.]

1. **soote.** Students of alert mind notice that Chaucer, in ll. 1, 5, uses two forms for *sweet*, *soote* and *swete*, and wonder why. *Soote* is a variant, due to the adverb (O.E. *swōt*) of *swete* (O.E. *swēte*). Both were in use in Chaucer's time; he here uses *soote* for the rime. Similar double forms find explanation when the history of the word in question is examined.

6. **holt and heeth.** As we might say "wood and pasture."

7. **yonge sonne.** "Young" because beginning a new course after the spring equinox.

8. **halfe cours.** In April the sun goes through the latter half, approximately, of the sign of the Ram (begun in March) and the first half of the sign of the Bull. His "half course" in the Ram was completed.

Chaucer was fond of astronomical allusions. He knew the astronomy of his time fairly well; a selection from his treatise on the astrolabe is included in this volume. Attempts have frequently been made to use the astronomical allusions in his poems as aids to ascertaining their date of composition, but to little helpful purpose.

yronne. The *y-* is the M.E. equivalent of O.E. *ge-*, the participial prefix, not retained in modern English, as it is in German.

13. **palmeres.** A "pilgrim" was a person making any, even a single, pilgrimage, as to Canterbury, St. James of Compostela, Rome, or Jerusalem. A "palmer," properly, was a pilgrim who had received, and was entitled to wear, the palm, as having visited Jerusalem. It seems to have come also to mean a person who devoted his life to making pilgrimages, subsisting by charity on the way.

17. St. Thomas Becket. See Introduction, p. xxvii.

20. See Introduction, p. xxvi.

34. **devyse.** Present used as future, as often in O.E. and still in modern English, "I go to town to-morrow."

40. The dot under the *e* in *whiche* indicates that the *e* is silent. This diacritic is used throughout the *Prologue* where necessary, but not in the other texts, as the reader will soon learn to recognize the silent *e*'s without help. Similarly, the use of accents to mark the meter is confined to the *Prologue*.

43. Compare this realistic picture of the Knight — one who loved and observed chivalry — with the romantic conceptions of knightly prowess which we draw from the stories of King Arthur's court and other romances. The Knight had gained distinction in his military service for his king, and then, it would seem, went wherever fighting was going on, particularly against heathen foes, winning honor everywhere. Chaucer says nothing of lesser feats of arms, as in tourneys, for the Knight is a veteran of "mortal battles" and single combats to the death. He does speak of jousting when he comes to the young Squire.

47–66. The knight is described as having taken part in "his lord's wars" (the campaigns of Edward III in France probably) and in many of the notable wars of the half-century previous to Chaucer's writing. It is worthy of remark how many of these wars were against heathen foes; against the Moors in Spain (Granada, Algeciras) and in Africa (Benamarin, Tremezen); with Pierre de Lusignan in Asia Minor (Adalia), in Egypt (Alexandria), and in Armenia (Ayas); with the Christian lord of Palathia, in Palathia, against the Turk; and with the famous order of Teutonic Knights in Prussia in campaigns connected with their conquests from the Lithuanians and other heathen Slavic peoples about the Baltic. It has not been satisfactorily ascertained that Chaucer drew his portrait from any real person.

52. He had been placed in the seat of honor at banquets of the Knights of the Teutonic Order in Prussia above knights of other nations.

63. **In listes.** That is, in single combat, champions of each side meeting each other, as in a tourney, by arrangement upon a challenge.

75. The **gypon** of the Knight showed the marks of his *habergeon* as, in

gratitude for his safe return or in performance of a vow, he had started immediately upon his pilgrimage.

79. Note the contrasts and similarities which render the picture of the Squire doubly effective beside that of his father. His father, old and honored as he is, makes little show in his appointments. His son, in the happiness of his youth, takes pleasure in gay dress and in the exercise of the courtly arts in which he is proficient. But he gives every promise of following worthily his father's example. He is a "bachelor," that is, a candidate for knighthood, and, young as he is, has already seen service and approved himself well, for he is of unusual strength and yet agile, rides and jousts well (no athletic sport to-day could compare with jousting for the strength and skill required; read the opening chapters of Henry Newbolt's *The New June*). Withal, his courtesy, modesty, sense of duty, showed he inherited and emulated his father's fine qualities.

It will be noticed that he was a "lover" (l. 80). This means that he made love a part of his profession of chivalry, doing service for his chosen lady (l. 88). Sometimes service of this sort involved the performance of laborious, difficult, or dangerous feats imposed by the lover's mistress. Chaucer, writing of the Duchess Blanche in the *Rime of the Duchess*, says, in the person of John of Gaunt, that she was not one to cause a lover to go, "without hood to the Dry Sea and come home by the Carrenare," that is, as recently made clear, to make a journey to the far interior of Asia — an ironical exaggeration, doubtless, but indicating the extravagant nature of some of these commissions. John of Gaunt is pictured in that poem as making a profession of love, as the Squire here is.

100. His dutiful performance of this service indicates his careful bringing up. Etiquette in such matters was punctiliously regulated, as incidental references and books of courtesy show.

101. A yeoman ranked above a knave or groom. The yeoman here is an archer, clad in the "Lincoln green" characteristic of the famous English archers, dreaded by foreign nations.

104. Skeat notes that Ascham in his *Toxophilus* considers peacock feathers too rough and heavy. Many that had used them because of their "gayness" had laid them aside; "the goose is best fether for the best shoter."

107. Skeat explains this line as meaning, "His arrows were not draggled with feathers inclined too low," but there does not seem to be evidence for such a sense of *drouped*. The meaning seems to be simply that the arrows did not droop or fall in flight owing to poor feathers.

115. The yeoman wore a silver image of St. Christopher because of the belief that a figure of the saint protected the wearer from danger.

118. This is one of the most famous of Chaucer's portraits because of its

characteristic blending of sympathy and gentle mocking humor. He does full justice to the Prioress's goodness and amiability and tenderness of heart, but delights at the same time in her harmless complacency and her little refinements and affectations.

A prioress (like a prior under an abbot) was the chief official under the abbess in a convent, or, in some cases, the head of a smaller or dependent convent. Chaucer's Prioress seems to have been the head of a convent, judging from the fact that she had a chaplain (l. 164), and from her general importance.

120. The use of oaths in medieval times was frequent, as in some continental countries to-day. The romances, and especially the miracle plays, are full of them. It was generally supposed that to swear by St. Eligius meant to swear not at all, as St. Eligius refused to swear when Dagobert desired him to do so, and was believed without taking oath. Recent investigation has shown that St. Loy was a patron saint of travelers, and that the passage means that, being on a journey, the Prioress for that reason confined her invocations for the time being to that saint.

125. "French of the Benedictine convent of Stratford-le-Bow, not French of Paris." That is, she spoke Anglo-French, the provincial French of England, which had come to be very different from French of the Continent, or even its main source, Norman French. It was long supposed Chaucer was joking at the Prioress's expense, as one might say, "Oh, yes, she speaks French fluently — New York French." There are other similar references to dialectal varieties of French in England, and passages in French poems making sport of the provincial French of England, which seemed comical to French ears.

161. A "crowned A" stood for Amor; that is, Love or charity, the greatest of the Christian virtues.

164. With three priests, the number of pilgrims is thirty, not twenty-nine, the number Chaucer gives in l. 24, "Well nine and twenty." The title and prologue of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* indicate that there was one only. This seems to be a minor detail (one of many) left uncorrected by the author. We must remember that the work was incomplete at Chaucer's death, and was left still in the rough.

165. Chaucer's description of the frank worldliness of the Monk is wholly genial and kindly — he has no quarrel with any one so frank and straightforward — but a difference between profession and practice always awakens his irony, and one can begin to see how his humor can bite in the explanation he gives, to justify (so simply and reasonably from the Monk's point of view) that worthy's preoccupation with worldly pleasures.

The Monk, it will be seen, was one of the men of business of his monastery, and also head of one of its minor branches. This illustrates the elaborate

organization and large interests of a great monastery in medieval times. The administration of such an institution was somewhat like that of a large college or university to-day, and its chief officers had to be men of great executive ability and of varied gifts beside. Compare the *Chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelonde*, a contemporary account of how the great Abbot Samson brought up the declining fortunes of his monastery, or Carlyle's account of Samson in *Past and Present*.

173. St. Benedict was the founder of the Benedictine order, the earliest of the Roman monastic orders, and St. Maur was his disciple. The "rule" is the body of regulations, or constitution, observed by the members of an order.

174. Relaxation of rule was frequent, especially where monasteries grew rich and their members more worldly and self-indulgent.

177. **a pulled hen.** Such phrases to intensify a negative are very common in Middle English, apparently in imitation of the French. We use similar phrases ("I don't care a pin, a rap, a Continental," etc.), but with nothing like such a range of humorous allusion ("bean, pea, rag, oyster, drowned mouse," etc.). The reason why a plucked hen should be referred to as worthless is not clear; possibly it was because it was believed not to be able to lay eggs. But "hen" by itself is so used, and "plucked" was added probably merely as a humorous variation.

178. The allusion is probably connected in some way with the legend of Nimrod's wickedness.

179, 180. This comparison is a frequent one from an early time. The word *recchelees* has caused great trouble, attempts being made to emend it to some word of which l. 181 might be an explanation. In one manuscript a scribe has changed it to *cloisterlees* with this idea in mind. The view generally held now is that *recchelees* is right, and was used by Chaucer in the sense of "heedless of" or "careless in observance of" his vows, hence "without a rule," and hence, l. 181, "out of his cloister." This is not satisfactory. The true explanation would seem to be that l. 181 expresses a limitation on the word *monk* in l. 179. "Nor (did he care for the text which says) that a monk, when he is heedless of regulations, is to be likened to a fish that is waterless [which perishes if it passes out of its proper element]. This text is speaking of a monk when he is out of his cloister [for in his cloister he is under rule], but [in any case] he did not think the text worth considering."

Emerson has shown that the text referred to in l. 175 probably goes back to a saying ascribed to Jerome that holy fishers are found in the Scriptures, but not holy hunters. The comparison of the monk and the fish seems to have been a commonplace in theological reference.

186. The Augustinian rule (like the Benedictine) prescribed manual labor as a part of the daily routine.

187. "How shall the world get the various kinds of service it requires? Let Austin have his manual labor reserved to him [if he cares so much for it. As for himself, his service lay in another direction]. Therefore he was a hard rider and hunter."

204. **prelate.** Formerly applied to the superior officers of monasteries as well as to bishops; here used humorously, as the monk was not really an abbot or prior.

208. After describing a representative of the monastic orders, Chaucer turns next to the mendicant orders. The members of these orders differed from those of the monastic orders in not leading a cloistered life, but going about preaching, doing errands of mercy, and begging for their orders. The four chief orders were the Franciscans (also called Minorites and Gray Friars), the Augustines, the Dominicans (Black Friars or Jacobites), and the Carmelites (or White Friars). Their origin was in the thirteenth century and later. They became powerful and wealthy (despite the vows of extreme poverty imposed on their members), and awakened the lively jealousy of the monastic orders.

The Friar is a "limitor"; that is, one who begged within a certain "limitation," or district assigned to him. Chaucer does not spare his hypocrisy and immorality, using his favorite method of ironical praise. This Limitor can make himself welcome everywhere, has innumerable friends, reputable and disreputable, can wheedle a gift equally well from a woman of wealth or a poor widow; uses his license to hear confession to make profit; has a certain easy, selfish good nature and jollity, but is wholly unprincipled.

216. **frankeleyns.** See note on l. 331.

220. **licentiat.** Holder of a special license from the pope to hear confessions independent of the episcopal authority to which the parish clergy were subject. A parish priest could not grant absolution in certain cases.

225. The reader must be careful in this passage to understand to whom each *he* refers. "For to give to a mendicant order is a sign that a man is well shriven. For, if the penitent gave something, he durst make a cocksure statement that he knew the man was repentant," etc.

239. **champioun.** Judicial cases might be decided by combat; the "champions" here referred to were the professional fighters engaged for such contests by accused persons.

242. **lazar.** Leprosy was a common ailment throughout Europe in medieval times and later.

254. *"In principio"* (*erat verbum*). "In the beginning was the word" (John, i, 1), the text used by the begging friars in entering a house.

258. The Limitor was sought after as an umpire upon "love-days," that is days set for settling disputes by arbitration.

262. Skeat cites Wyclif with reference to the richness of the cloth worn by friars.

270. Forked beards were then fashionable.

276. "He would the sea were kept safe from piracy, or privateering."

277. Middelburgh is in the Netherlands. The Orwell, an estuary near Harwell, was formerly called the "port of Orwell." This reference aids in dating the *Prologue* between 1384 and 1388, as only during that period the wool staple (the port appointed for the trade in wool) was at Middelburgh.

278. **sheeldes.** Crowns, so called (like the French *écus*) as bearing shields on one side. The merchant knew how to get a good rate of exchange for his money.

285. The term *clerk* originally meant a cleric; that is, a person in holy orders, of which there were eight. As learning was practically confined to clerics, it came to be applied to a person able to read and write, to students, or to persons of learning. The Clerk in this case is a student at the University of Oxford. He has devoted himself especially to "logic," or "dialectic," the art of formal reasoning, one of the chief branches of medieval learning. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric made up the "trivium," and arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, the "quadrivium," in the medieval curriculum of the seven "liberal arts."

Medieval students were by no means all so devoted to their books as this Clerk. We hear of them often as idle and careless, wandering from one university to another, devoted to jovial pleasures, and more interested in making verses and singing them than in the pursuit of Aristotle and his philosophy. English students were notoriously troublesome at foreign universities, to which they resorted in large numbers.

290. The works of Aristotle were a dominant influence in the intellectual life of Europe until reduced to less importance by the developments of the Renaissance.

291. "He had not gotten a clerical position, nor was he worldly enough to hold an office." Clerics often held what we would call administrative positions.

298. "Philosopher" also meant alchemist, and it is to this sense Chaucer refers jokingly. He delighted to make fun of the alchemists and expose their pretensions (as in the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*). His disbelief in both alchemy and astrology is a notable fact, for belief in both was general up to the eighteenth century, and still exists among ignorant and foolish people in our own day.

307. **moral virtue.** Virtue or morality, excellence of character. We use the term *virtue* by itself in this sense. Chaucer is quoting the phrase from Aristotle, who distinguishes "moral virtue" from "intellectual virtue."

309. The title of "Sergeant" indicated the highest rank to which a lawyer could attain in his profession. The degree was given only after long service and by special patent. It is now granted in England, but merely as an honorary degree, and confers no special rights and privileges as formerly.

310. **Parvis.** Here, specifically the parvis, or porch, of St. Paul's, used especially by lawyers as a place of meeting.

314. The "justices" or judges of the assize courts held in the various counties were appointed by special commission. He had often been so appointed.

317. **robes.** Robes (presumably the legal "long robes") given by clients in compliment in addition to the payment of their fees.

331. A franklin was a landholder of wealth and position, but not bearing title, the equivalent of the modern country gentleman. This Franklin was a vavasour, and had held the honorable positions of Sheriff of his county, "countour" (perhaps Auditor), and Knight of the Shire (that is, Member of Parliament). His wealth is indicated in l. 339, and by his abounding hospitality.

333. **sangwyn.** One of the four "complexions," or physical "temperaments," recognized by the old school of medicine (see ll. 411–444, note).

336. Epicurus held that pleasure is the highest good. A common error accepts this pleasure as meaning pleasure of the senses; here, perhaps, for the first time in English. Chaucer found the doctrine of Epicurus in Boethius.

340. See HF. 1022, note.

365. These four craftsmen were clad in the livery (this word until the seventeenth century meant a special dress, not necessarily the dress of servants) of their gild. The trade gilds in the several towns controlled each its particular trade or craft, as respects prices, number of apprentices, and the like, and exercised great influence in municipal affairs. It will be remembered that the miracle plays were put in charge of the gilds by the municipal authorities, each gild being responsible for a particular play.

388. This is one of Chaucer's most famous portraits. How accurate in point of detail Chaucer is is illustrated by the fact that there was a vessel called the *Maudelayne* (l. 410) hailing from Dartmouth, then a port of some importance, in Chaucer's own time. A higher truth of realism is seen in such graphic touches as the reference to the Shipman's riding, "as well as he could." A sailor's fondness for, and ignorance of, riding is now proverbial, but Chaucer was very likely the first to note it with the artistic eye for characteristic detail and to record it. Similarly picturesque is the reference to the drafts of wine stolen from the consignment of wine while the "chapman" (the owner or his agent) was asleep; and that also of his making his prisoners walk the plank (l. 400), when he fought and conquered as privateer, or even possibly as pirate,

for in those days a sea captain need not hesitate to turn pirate on occasion if a good opportunity offered. The Shipman knows his trade well — tides, currents, the dangers that beset him, harborage (all the havens from Scotland in the Baltic to the Cape of Finistere), the changes of the moon, pilotage. Chaucer also knew it well; he must have known many a shipman intimately through his service in the customs. But there is more than the inventive and realistic imagination at work here. There is a touch of the highest poetic imagination in the justly famous line, "With many a tempest had his beard been shaken."

411–444. The Doctor of Physic introduces a curious and, in its way, interesting subject, the old school of medicine founded on the teachings of Galen, a Greek physician of the second century, A.D., which dominated medical teaching to the seventeenth century, when they were gradually displaced. The system taught in brief that, as there were four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, and as these represent four qualities, hot, cold, dry, moist, in combination (earth, for example, being cold and dry, water cold and moist, etc.), so these qualities, or "humors," appear in four "complexions," or characteristic temperaments, of man, the "melancholy" (cold and dry), the "phlegmatic" (cold and moist), the "choleric" (hot and dry), the "sanguine" (hot and moist). We still use these terms to describe the facial appearance and mental disposition. For example, a "sanguine complexion," that is, one that is ruddy and plethoric; a "sanguine temperament," one that is hopeful and eager. If there is excess of one or more of the humors in the body, a morbid "complexion" results, indicating disease, and it is the duty of the physician to counteract this excess by applying their opposites to effect a cure. The drawing of a great quantity of blood from a patient, so long in vogue, was due to the belief originally that evil humors would be drawn away with it. Galen's principles were entirely incorrect, but his teaching was an advance in certain respects, as in the use of the pulse in diagnosis.

Galen believed in the use of amulets and charms. This fourteenth-century Doctor used astrology. The fundamental idea in astrology (going back to a remote antiquity) is that the stars (planets), in their various combinations and relations as they circle in the heavens, affect the lives of men and events; that a man's life is shaped by their "influence" at the moment of his birth, and the success or failure of an undertaking is determined in this way, according to the moment it is entered upon. The doctor watched his patient (l. 415) in respect to special hours, good or bad, which he ascertained by his "natural magic" (magic without recourse to the agency of spirits, using natural means), and (l. 417) "he knew how to find out the character of the ascendant of the images he used in treating his patient." It was believed that by making and treating an image of the patient, or part of him, or of something associated

with his malady in some way, as the case might be, at the proper time, the patient might be benefited. This notion of using images with intent to harm persons or animals is familiar in witchcraft.

426. **letuaries.** Electuaries; a paste of honey or other sweetmeat disguising the taste of a drug mixed in it.

429–434. Chaucer is as fond of a list of impressive or musical names as Milton. Here he cites all the famous medical authorities, including the god of Medicine, Esculapius; the Greek physicians, Dioscorides, Rufus, Hippocrates, and Galen; the Arabian physicians, Haly, Serapion, Rhasis, Avicenna, Damascenus; the Moorish scholar, Averroes; Constantinus of Salerno; Bernardus Gordonius, professor of Medicine at Montpellier in Chaucer's time; John Gatesden, physician at Oxford in the early part of the fourteenth century; Gilbertus Anglicus, if Warton is right in thus explaining "Gilbertyn." It is not worth while to learn these names, but it is worth while to notice the names of Arabian scholars among them. Arabian scholarship, especially in respect to mathematics, astronomy, and alchemy (the forerunner of chemistry), had a most important influence, more particularly through the Arabs and Moors in Spain, upon Europe.

438. Doctors have always had a reputation for skepticism.

443. The plague (the same as the bubonic plague to-day) made a series of visitations throughout Europe in this century. The Great Plague of 1349, which produced such important economic effects in England by the number of deaths it caused, was followed by several lesser visitations.

443. Chaucer's joke turns on the use of gold as a medicine, the so-called *aurum potabile*, made of powdered gold in oil.

445. The Wife of Bath is a woman of the lower middle class, coarse, hearty, jolly, fond of sport, who has become well-off by her shrewd management of her business (and of her five husbands also) and is now bent on having every one pay her as much attention as possible and also upon seeing the world. The account of her journeys (ll. 463 following) may well surprise us. She is one of Chaucer's most striking characterizations; he gives her a long prologue to her tale, in which (safely in her character) he comments sharply on certain medieval church doctrines with a freedom prophetic of the independent thinkers of the Reformation.

460. **at chirche-dore.** Marriages took place at the church door, followed by mass within the church.

465. There was a famous shrine of the Virgin at Boulogne.

466. St. James of Compostela in Galicia was one of the most notable shrines visited by pilgrims in this and the following century. At Cologne she visited the shrine in which the reputed bones of the Magi were preserved.

477. The beautiful picture which Chaucer gives of the devout and self-

sacrificing Parson, devoted to the good of his parish, unsparing in ministering to his flock, patient and gentle, but able to administer a sharp rebuke when deserved, is in marked contrast to the biting irony of his portrayal of the Monk and Friar, and of the Pardoner below. And here Chaucer does not leave the opposite type, the negligent or self-seeking parish priest, unreproved; in ll. 507 ff. he refers to those who leave their benefices and their flocks to a curate and run off to St. Paul's to make money by appointment to a chantry or to be eased of living expenses by joining a brotherhood.

It was formerly questioned whether Chaucer was a religious person or not. Probably he was not in the medieval sense, — he was too independent of mind for that, — but he certainly knew the spirit of true religion from its pretense, and in the truest sense possessed it himself.

486. The Parson was unwilling to excommunicate those who were negligent in paying, or who refused to pay, their tithes.

498. Matthew, v, 19.

499. A common comparison in theological literature.

509. See above, note on ll. 477 ff.

526. **spiced.** That makes pretense of being just and scrupulous. The sense is derived, according to Skeat, from the French original. Fees were paid in advance to judges, called *espices*, spices. So paid, they would be just in judgment, and, if approached, could only be corrupted by a large bribe. Hence, a person with a "spiced conscience" would be one who pretends to be scrupulous, but really not beyond taking a bribe.

529. Chaucer's praise of the goodness of the Plowman was probably due to the great poem of Langland's *Piers Plowman*. In his vision, seeing greed and corruption manifest everywhere in the world and the church, Langland finds true religion and holiness only in the simple plowman.

541. Skeat notes that people of quality would not ride upon a mare.

542. See the notes below on these characters.

545 ff. Note how Chaucer's unfailing skill in selecting details that express essential character effects a totally different impression in different cases; — compare, for example, this picture of the Miller with that of the Prioress. Another principle, as well, is involved. Chaucer gives the Miller only so much attention as he deserves, while the portrait of the Prioress is carefully elaborated. Compare other characters in respect to the degree of their elaboration, and see how admirably in each case Chaucer's artistic judgment is justified. Chaucer always bears in mind what is necessary for the reader to form a complete conception, and that condition satisfied, how far the intrinsic interest and dramatic effectiveness of the subject in hand permits further elaboration.

548. The prize usually offered in country wrestling bouts.

560. **goliardeys.** A jester or buffoon; here, a teller of loose tales. The word takes its meaning from the writers of loose, usually satirical, Latin verse, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, throughout France, England, and Germany, whose model was a certain supposed Bishop "Golias," invented either to explain the name or to serve as the nominal author of such poems.

562. **tollen.** To take toll. Millers were paid for grinding grain in kind, taking a certain fraction of the quantity ground. This Miller would take three times the proper amount.

563. "And yet, forsooth, he had a thumb of gold." According to one explanation, a miller's thumb assumed a characteristic shape, owing to his testing flour by rubbing it between thumb and finger, and that a miller was said to have a thumb of gold when able to test flour skillfully. This would lead to one possible interpretation of Chaucer's meaning, namely, that the miller was able to do well for himself not only by dishonesty in taking toll, but also by his skill in testing flour. This interpretation is, however, open to question, partly because, so far as there is any evidence, the golden thumb seems to be itself associated with skill in taking toll so as to get as much as possible (see N. E.D. s.v. *miller*, 1 b), and partly because of the proverb, "An honest miller has a golden thumb," *i.e.* no miller is honest. Chaucer undoubtedly has the proverb in mind, delighting in its irony, and in giving to it a still further and more subtle ironic turn: "He took toll thrice, and yet he was an honest miller, for he had the thumb of gold honest millers have"; that is, by implication, he not only took his toll three times over, but took it with the thumb so disposed as to afford himself the largest quantity possible each time.

565. Still a favorite instrument, especially in Scotland and in many parts of the Continent.

567. The duty of a manciple, as of a steward to-day, was to purchase provisions and stores for a community. The title was one used in monasteries, colleges, and the "temples" or community houses of the legal societies called the "Inns of Court." This clever steward, while an ignorant man (l. 575), by his cleverness could "set the caps" of all the wise lawyers in his temple, trained though they were in the care of estates and the charge of public accounts.

587. A reeve was a bailiff. In this case, the Reeve was an upper bailiff, and, apparently, in charge of an estate, in respect to practical details, during its owner's minority.

594. **auditor.** In its usual present meaning, a person appointed to check the accounts of another and see that they are correct.

611. After stealing from his lord, he knew how to win his lord's liking, and please him, by giving and lending to him of what was really his own property.

His master was probably on allowance during minority, and when short of money came to the Reeve, who gave him a gift or loan, and got in return thanks, and a present of a coat and hood beside.

616. As appears from l. 619, the Reeve was from Norfolk. It is an excellent illustration of Chaucer's truth in minor details, that Scot was, and is still, a name widely used there for horses. Chaucer, it may be added, had ancestors who lived in Norfolk, and may have had kinsfolk living there during his lifetime.

619. Notice the spelling Northfolk, as illustrating the etymology of Norfolk.

623. A Summoner was an ecclesiastical officer whose duty it was to detect offenses against the ecclesiastical law and bring the offenders before the ecclesiastical court, which at this time had charge of certain cases and offenses now taken care of in the civil court; for example, matrimonial and testamentary cases, those concerned with church dues, immorality, perjury, etc. Chaucer deals with him as he has already dealt with the Monk and the Friar, exposing his corrupt practices by ironic praise.

624. **cherubynnes.** The plural used as a singular. This has been a common error at all times, owing to a mistaken use of the Hebrew plural, cherubim, as a singular. Cherubs in church windows and elsewhere were depicted as red in color, whence the allusion.

625. Salt phlegm was a malady attributed to too much of the phlegmatic humor in the blood.

641. In his capacity as officer of the ecclesiastical court.

642. A proverb — "a jay can call Watt by name as well as the pope can." The jay (not our jay, but a bird similarly noisy, whence the transfer of name to our jays) could be trained to talk like a parrot or magpie.

646. A formula used after stating a case, "The question is, what law (is there bearing on this point)?"

652. He could get his money away from a foolish or inexperienced person. Cf. the modern phrase, "to pluck a pigeon."

655. The archdeacon (who is the executive of the bishop) sat over the lowest ecclesiastical court, and might administer excommunication as a punishment.

658. "The purse is the archdeacon's place of punishment." The readiness of the archdeacon to receive a fine in place of excommunicating the offender was well known to the Summoner.

659. Chaucer ironically forces home the slant at the archdeacon. "Of course he was lying, for every guilty man ought to fear excommunication, for it will slay the soul just as absolution will save it."

667. A garland, set upon a pole (the "ale-stake"), was the sign of an alehouse, as a bush of ivy, indicating the sale of wine (the ivy typified Bacchus),

was of a tavern. The garland was made of three hoops at right angles, decorated with ribbons.

669. A pardoner was a person licensed to sell papal pardons and indulgences. Indulgences were documents conveying remission of the punishment still due for sins even after absolution; in common practice they were regarded as licenses freeing the holder from the consequences of sins he might commit. The selling of pardons and indulgences, as by this rascally Pardoner with his false relics and canting hypocrisy, became a fearful abuse and was one of the practices most bitterly denounced by the Reformers. Jusserand has shown that Chaucer's account, caricature though it might seem, was not in the least exaggerated.

670. **Rouncivale.** The Hospital of the Blessed Mary of Rouncivalle in London, a "cell" or branch of the Priory of Roncevaux in Navarre.

674. The song is not known.

682. It seems to have been the new fashion to ride with hair loose and the head bare. He had tucked his hood into his wallet, and only had a small cap on his head.

685. **vernycle.** A copy of the "veronica," or handkerchief of St. Veronica at Rome, upon which the face of Christ was printed miraculously when she wiped his face with it when on his way to crucifixion.

692. **fro Berwyk unto Ware.** From the north to the south of England.

706. As we would say, "make monkeys of them."

714. The reader will doubtless wish to have, with these other portraits, Chaucer's portrait of himself. See the link to *Sir Thopas* given on p. 97, and the note thereupon.

726. "That ye ascribe it not to lack of good breeding on my part, though I speak plainly in this matter to tell you their words and their behavior, just as they were, nor though I speak their words precisely." Their behavior was not always seemly, and their stories were not all of them commendable, so Chaucer apologizes in advance.

734. The *he* here and the second *he* in l. 737 refer to the original teller. Such confusion in the use of pronouns is common in Middle English.

741, 742. Chaucer found this in Boethius.

746. Chaucer is as fond of a joke on himself as on other people.

751. The Host (his name is given elsewhere as Harry Bailey) fulfils, throughout the links connecting the tales, the genial promise of his description here. He exercises the authority given him with unfailing humor, tact, and firmness.

782. **I will yeve yow myn heed.** Such affirmations were common in medieval use, "by my head," "maugre my head," etc.

790–792. See the Introduction, p. xxix.

814. reportour. The Host was to remember and report the tales as umpire when giving judgment as to the best.

823. our aller cok. "The cock to waken us all." In the Middle Ages, when there were few clocks, the cock's crow served as an indication of dawn.

826. The watering place of St. Thomas was a brook two miles on the way to Canterbury.

The Knight's Tale

[A. 859–3108]

[For comment upon this tale, see the Introduction, p. xxiii. Its relation to the original *Palamon and Arcite*, mentioned in the *Legend of Good Women*,

> And all the love of Palamon and Arcite
> Of Thebes, though the story is little known,

has not been definitely determined. The earlier theory that Chaucer translated Boccaccio's *Teseide*, more or less at length in stanzas, later used portions of his translation for other works (*Parliament of Birds*, *Anelida and Arcite*, and *Troilus and Cressida*), and then rewrote his version in couplets, cutting it down for the *Canterbury Tales*, is now generally discredited, and the view is accepted that the *Knight's Tale* as we have it is practically identical with the earlier work.

It is important to remember that Chaucer's poem is not a "translation" of Boccaccio's. Only some six or seven hundred lines out of a total of 2250 are translated, or even imitated, from his original. [Chaucer's frequent improvements upon his source are illustrated in the note to l. 1995.]

Motto. The Latin verses prefixed to the *Knight's Tale* are drawn from the *Thebaidos* of Statius, Book xii, ll. 519 f.

> Iamque domos patrias Scythicae post aspera gentis
> proelia laurigero subeuntem Thesea curru,
> laetifici plausus missusque ad sidera vulgi
> clamor et emeritis hilaris tuba nuntiat armis.

"And now rejoicing plaudits and the shouts of the populace lifted to the sky, and the trumpet expressing joy in his approved conquests announce Theseus returning in his laureled chariot to his native country after his hard battles with the Scythian people."

The appropriateness of the quotation will be seen upon reference to ll. 866, 869, 870. The same passage is cited at the beginning of the story of *Anelida and Arcite*, an unfinished poem written before the *Knight's Tale*, and dealing with a Theban knight at the court of Theseus. Chaucer there

paraphrases the lines given above and the description of the triumph of Theseus which follows.

860. In the *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer tells how Theseus escaped from the Minotaur in Crete by the aid of Ariadne, and how he traitorously abandoned her on his way home because of his love for her sister. In that poem he is represented as one of the great examples of men's faithlessness in love. In this story, he is depicted as a great king, as magnanimous as he is powerful.

866. **regne of Femenye.** Realm of the "woman's country"; that is, of the Amazons. Femenye, or Amazonia, was traditionally identified with, made a part of, or placed near, Scythia, on the borders of Europe and Asia.

868. **Ipolita.** Hippolyta. She appears as a character in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (Skeat).

884. **tempest.** Apparently a reference to a "watershake" which, just after her landing, December 18, 1381, destroyed the ship on which Anne of Bohemia came to England to wed Richard II. No tempest is mentioned in Boccaccio, and Lowes, who gives this explanation (*Modern Language Notes*, xix, 240), uses it as evidence in dating the poem.

926. "That ensureth no estate, or condition to be well (free from the chance of change)."

928. **Clemence.** Clemency, or Pity. Suggested by Boccaccio.

932. **Capaneus.** One of the seven heroes who beseiged Thebes.

938. Creon was king of Thebes contemporary with Œdipus.

978–980. The pennon was of gold hammered thin in the shape of the Minotaur, the monster Theseus slew in the labyrinth at Crete by the aid of Ariadne.

1041–1047. Compare the passage l. 1500 ff. where Arcite rides forth to "doon his observaunce to May" (Skeat cites from *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* the parallel line "To do observaunce to a morn of May"). This paying honor to May is familiar to us in the special customs of May Day, but Emelye's devotion is not limited to the single day. These two passages (note especially ll. 1042 and 1496) recall Herrick's *Corinna's going a-Maying.*

> Get up, get up for shame! The blooming morn
> Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.
> See how Aurora throws her fair
> Fresh-quilted colours through the air.
> Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
> The dew bespangling herb and tree!

1051. **sonne** is genitive. Note that *aspect* and *disposition*, like many astrological terms, have become words in general use with senses colored by

their original technical meaning. Saturn and Mars were planets of evil influences.

1089. **we . . . sworn.** "We had sworn it to be otherwise," "we had sworn to the contrary."

1091. **short and playn.** "Brief statement of the plain fact of the matter."

1131. They were by kinship cousins, and by sworn vow (in accordance with a common medieval practice), "brothers." This assumed brotherhood was held to be a tie as close as, or even closer than, actual brotherhood. In later use, either traditionally derived from, or in imitation of, the medieval practice, the tie has even been called "blood brotherhood" (as in Germany), the ceremonies attending the oath sometimes including the drinking by each of a drop of the other's blood.

1155. ***par amour.*** With love, in the way of love; also, for love's sake. The phrase "to love *par amour*" meant to love with the passion of love, not with the love of kinship, friendship, unimpassioned admiration, or religious adoration.

1163. Chaucer, here and below (l. 1262), is quoting Boethius; see HF. 972, note.

1172. **al thy lyf.** At any time in thy life.

1177. Skeat notes that the fable in this particular form is not found in any of the usual collections. The robber is usually a fox.

1198. This story is from the *Romaunt of the Rose.*

1201. Note the evidence that the poem was originally written to be read.

1247. The four "elements," from which, it was believed, all things were made.

1259. **matere.** This matter of not accepting what God gives.

1261. **dronke . . . as a mous.** A common proverbial saying, due, it may be conjectured, to mice becoming stupefied by eating fermented mash.

1347. **questioun.** In the sentimental cult of love, questions of conduct in love were debated with great nicety and seriousness.

1374. **Hereos.** Eros, the Greek god corresponding to Cupid.

1375. See A. 411, note, above.

1376. "In the forward part of the head, in the fantastic cell of his brain." Skeat quotes Batman upon Bartholome with reference to madness as an infection of the foremost cell of the brain. The "cells" were supposed compartments in the brain in which the various faculties were lodged.

1377. **up-so-down.** The Middle English equivalent of our "upside down." the *so* is the same as *as* — "with the up as down."

1387. **slepy yerde.** His sleep-producing wand, the *caduceus.*

1388. **hat.** The broad-brimmed *petasus,* which Mercury is depicted as wearing.

1390. Mercury slew Argus, despite his hundred eyes, by charming him to sleep.

1428. Chaucer substituted "Philostrate" for Penteo, the name which Boccaccio uses, borrowing it from Boccaccio's *Philostrato*, evidently in the belief, as Skeat points out, that it meant "one prostrated by love," whereas it really means "army lover."

1494. From Dante, *Purgatario*, i, 19, 20: —

> The beauteous planet, that to love incites,
> Was making all the Orient to laugh.

1500. See ll. 1041–1047, note.

1522. A widely spread proverb. Skeat cites it as used in Latin and German.

1524. A proverb.

1529. **roundel.** A short poem of from nine to fourteen lines, with one, two, or three lines repeated as a refrain, running usually in two rimes throughout. The modern rondeau is a form of it. Chaucer wrote a number, and also introduced them in one or two cases into longer poems.

1539. A proverb still used in England.

1546. Cadmus was the reputed founder of Thebes. Amphion, son of Zeus, took part in the expedition against Thebes, and moved its walls by the music of his lyre.

1566. "My death was decreed before my first shirt." Chaucer uses this quaint figure twice elsewhere, *Legend of Good Women*, 2629, *Troilus and Cressida*, iii, 733.

1625, 1626. From the *Romaunt of the Rose*, 8487, and ultimately from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ii, 846.

1668. From the *Teseide*, but also found, as a proverb, elsewhere.

1736. **it am I.** In Old English and in Middle English till about 1300, the form of this and similar phrases was *Ic hit eom* ("I it am;" so also "Thu hit eart," "He hit is," etc.). From about 1300 on, the form here used is found. In the fifteenth century, the modern form "It is I," etc., begins. In the sixteenth century the use of the oblique case, "It is me," "It is thee," etc., begins to develop, owing to the pronoun's following the verb, where an accusative or dative is used with transitive verbs. It developed slowly, *thee*, *him*, *her* being at first more common in this use than *me*. At present "It is me" is regarded as a permissible usage by the best grammarians, though it has not attained an authority like that of "It is you," which developed earlier and wholly supplanted "It is ye," *you*, in fact, taking the place of *ye* everywhere except in deliberately archaic language.

1761. A favorite line; Chaucer used it five times (*Legend of Good Women*, 503; *Man of Law's Tale*, B. 660; *Merchant's Tale*, E. 1986; *Squire's Tale*, F. 479).

1799. The sense is "Who can make an utter fool of himself, unless he fall in love?" There can be no folly equal that which one who is in love can commit. The idea is proverbial, and found from the classics down.

1807. **jolitee.** Used ironically.

1814. **servant.** A professed servant of love.

1838. **pypen in an ivy leef.** Go and try and find comfort by whistling in a leaf. The phrase "he can go whistle for his pains" is still used.

1850. **fifty wykes, fer ne ner.** "A year, not more or less." Skeat shows that "fifty wykes" means a year exactly, from the fact that the meeting for the tournament falls in May. He adduces interesting evidence in proof that Chaucer took care to be accurate in making the dates in the poem fit together and possess astrological significance.

1866. "Other than that, one of you shall be either dead or made prisoner."

1918. Compare Chaucer's other descriptions of temples of Venus, in the *House of Fame*, 119 ff., and *Parliament of Birds*, 183 ff., the latter, like the present description, based upon the *Teseide*, vii, 55–59. The pains of love, and the traits, properties, and actions (personified as attendants in her train), to which Chaucer refers, are conventionally associated with the service of Venus or Cupid and the allegorical "Courts of Love." Following these are examples of persons who illustrate the sovereignty of love.

1936. **Citheroun.** A mountain in Attica erroneously assumed to be sacred to Venus (really to Bacchus and the Muses) because of her name Cythęria derived from the island of that name, her home. The error appears in the *Romaunt of the Rose* and in Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum*.

1940. Chaucer borrows the gatekeeper from the *Romaunt of the Rose*.

1941–1946. These examples are chosen with reference to the conclusion expressed in ll. 1947–1954.

1947–1954. Because of his beauty Narcissus pined away for love of himself; the wise Solomon was turned to idolatry by his seven hundred wives and concubines (I Kings, xi); despite her powers of magic, Medea had to suffer for her love of Jason when he abandoned her and she slew the children she had borne him; and Circe, though she had turned so many men to beasts, was unable to enthral Ulysses.

1955–1965. This description of Venus and that of Mars (ll. 2041 ff.) seem to be taken from the *De Deorum Imaginibus* of Albricius.

1959. **howleth.** "Crieth aloud." Such a use of the word was not ludicrous in Chaucer's time, as it would be now.

1975–2040. Chaucer here uses Statius as well as his immediate original, the *Teseide*.

1985. The appropriateness of the gray, chill light entering by reflection from the north is apparent, as Marsh noted; Skeat, however, thinks the phrase to be due to a misunderstanding of a phrase in Statius.

1995. The graphic power of the following famous passage needs no pointing out. But it is an excellent example of how Chaucer frequently transcends his original. Compare *Teseide*, vii, 33, 34 with this passage : —

Videvi l'Ire rosse come fuoco
E la Paura pallida in quel loco,
E con gli occulti ferri i Tradimenti
Vide, e le Insidie con giusta apparenza.

" He saw Anger, red as fire, and pallid Fear in that place, and Treason with weapons hidden he sees, and Deceits wearing the appearance of truth."

1999. Often quoted of recent years from Stevenson, who borrowed the phrase from Chaucer, in his poem in *A Portrait:* —

I am the smiler with the knife,
The battener upon garbage I.
Good God, with such a rancid life,
Were it not better far to die!

2007. See Judges, iv.

2017. Several emendations have been suggested to avoid the curious use of *hoppestres*, dancers. It seems plain, however, that Chaucer supposed *carinae bellatrices* in Statius or *nave bellatrici* in Boccaccio, which really mean " warships," to mean " dancing " or " tossing ships," as if the adjective were *ballatrices* or *ballatrici*. Skeat adds evidence of a belief that Mars in the Zenith, in coöperation with a fixed star, was hostile to ships and caused them to be burned.

2024–2026. These are trades appropriate to persons born under the influence of the planet Mars, the planet and the god being identified for poetic purposes.

2028–2030. Chaucer may have learned the story in a version which did not give the name of Damocles.

2031–2032. Familiar examples of great men who suffered violent deaths.

2041–2050. See ll. 1955–1965, note.

2045. **Puella** and **Rubeus** are two of the sixteen figures used in the art of geomancy, or divination by the writing of dots. Four lines of dots written hurriedly, no note being taken of the number, are counted to ascertain whether they are odd or even. Write, in a place apart, for each odd, a single dot, for each even, two dots to right and left, in sequence vertically. Sixteen possible figures can thus be formed as the chance sequence of odds and evens may decide. With each of these figures was associated one of the " elements " (earth, air, fire, water), a planet, and a zodiacal sign, and the particular combination of the three belonging to the particular figure chanced upon gave the desired divination. The figure *Puella* comes from the sequence odd, even, odd, odd; *Rubeus* from even, odd, even, even. The planet of *Puella* was

Venus, and Chaucer may have mentioned it by error for "Puer" (odd, odd, even, odd), which, like *Rubeus*, had Mars for its planet.

2056–2061. **Calistopee.** Calisto, a nymph of Diana, changed into the constellation of the Great Bear. The apparent error in l. 2059 (the polestar being in the Lesser Bear) was derived by Chaucer from his sources. The son of Calisto (l. 2061) was Arcas, changed into the constellation of Arctophylax, or Boötes.

2062–2064. **Dane.** Daphne, whom Apollo loved and changed into a laurel.

2065. **Attheon.** Actæon.

2070. **Atthalante.** Atalanta, the famous huntress of classical mythology, who was exposed by her father on the mountain side as an infant, as he had desired a son, and was found and brought up by hunters. The story of how she was finally beaten in a race by the trick of the three golden apples, and forced to wed her conqueror, is familiar.

2071. **Meleagre.** The hero of Greek legend who slew the Calydonian boar, and (in later versions) became the lover of Atalanta. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, viii, 299.

2075. Diana, an Italian nature goddess, became identified with the Greek Artemis. She is represented here with her familiar attributes as protector of wild animals, huntress, goddess of the moon, of childbirth (hence the title Lucina, see following note), and also (in accordance with the later mythologies) is confused with Persephone, or Proserpine, the wife of Pluto.

2085. Lucina was originally a separate goddess, daughter of Jupiter and Juno, who presided over childbirth, but was later frequently confused with Juno and Diana, as exercising a like office.

2088. Chaucer indicates the excellence of the painter by his care in the choice of his colors.

2125–2127. Chaucer, of course, knew perfectly well that the contestants were not armed in armor of his own time — he is consciously modernizing the story throughout to make it realistic to his readers, and here takes the best means of suggesting the diversity of arms and armor. Even while doing so, he has to make, in l. 2125, his little joke about it.

2129. To illustrate the greatness of the champions involved in the contest, Chaucer describes one on each side. When he is compared with his source, Boccaccio, his superior art is evidenced here, as elsewhere, in the avoidance of digressions and long incidental descriptions; Boccaccio devotes a whole book to the two trains of champions.

2141. **nayles.** Of the bear.

2156. Chaucer seems to have added the name Emetrius to the story.

2197–2206. A graphic picture of medieval courtly life.

2217. Palamon goes to pray to Venus during the hour of Sunday night

which was sacred to her; so similarly Emily and Arcite to Diana and Mars during hours of Monday sacred to these divinities.

2224. **Adoun.** Adonis, the fair youth whom Venus loved and mourned when wounded by a boar.

2271. **inequal.** The night and day, as determined by sunrise and sunset, were divided, in astrology, each into twelve equal parts. Therefore an hour of day was never equal to an hour of night except at the equinoxes. These hours were therefore called "unequal," as compared with the "equal hours" measured by a clock.

2294. Not in Statius, as Skeat notes, but in the *Teseide*. The reference is merely a general one for impressiveness, as often in Chaucer and other medieval poets.

2299. See l. 2075, note.

2303. **Attheon.** Actæon. See ll. 2065–2068.

2313. A reference to Diana as the "tri-form goddess"; namely, Luna in the sky, Diana on earth, and Proserpine in Hades. See l. 2075, note.

2382. The omitted passage has reference to the love of Mars for Venus.

2403. See l. 2382, note.

2437. A proverbial comparison.

2451. **agayn his kynde.** As in the case of Mars above, god and the planet are identified. The planet Saturn was a planet of ill omen and the cause of strife and dissension. Hence, to cause strife to cease was "against his nature."

2454. Saturn's orbit was then the largest known. The planets Uranus and Neptune were not discovered till the nineteenth century.

2462. The sign of the Lion was supposed to increase evil influence.

2507. Skeat thinks Shakespeare remembered the passage in *Henry V*, iv, Prol. 12.

2512. Note that **blowen** here means "utter, send forth," an obsolete sense in use from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

2614–2619. "He," throughout this passage (as often in Middle English) is used as an indefinite demonstrative — translate "one," "another," "yet another," etc.

2615. **on his feet.** On foot; see l. 2550.

2626. **Galgopheye.** Plainly, as Skeat points out, the vale of Gargaphie, sacred to Diana (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, iii, 156), where Actæon was turned into a stag.

2683. "And was his whole (or sole) delight and happiness as concerns the desire of his heart."

2691. Death in this way from striking against the high front saddle bow was possibly not unusual. Skeat quotes the record of an accident curiously

like that of Arcite which happened in Chaucer's time. But the detail is taken from the *Teseide*.

2710. Note the construction.

2745. **for any lechecraft.** "Despite any physician's help (however skillful)."

2749–2750. The "virtues" are powers assumed to be given to the body by the soul. The "virtue expulsive" (as a function of the "animal virtue" seated in the brain) is the power of the body to expel what is hurtful. The "natural virtue," resident in the liver, is the power which moves the "humors" of the body by means of the veins (Skeat).

2787. "For one to speak of a servant [of Love] in proper terms."

2810. Chaucer, as Skeat points out, had already used Boccaccio's description of the passage of Arcite's soul to heaven in reference to the death of Troilus in the *Troilus and Cressida*. Hence, he makes use here of his frequent humorous trick of pleading ignorance in regard to difficult matters.

2815. **ther . . . gye.** "Where may Mars guide (care for) his soul."

2874. **whyte.** For the reason that Arcite was unmarried.

2920. Skeat has an interesting note on the development of the list of trees as a poetic convention — from Ovid through Virgil, Lucan, Statius, Boccaccio, Chaucer (in two passages), Tasso, Spenser. To these might be added several in English poets in the seventeenth century.

2928. **amadrides.** Hamadryades. Each tree, according to the beautiful classical myth, had its own nymph dwelling within it.

2960. **wake-pleyes.** Folk-plays and dances associated with special wakes or festivals.

2967. In the *Teseide*, Emily marries Arcite upon his deathbed, and Palamon shortly after Arcite's death in accordance with the dying man's injunction. The change which Chaucer makes enables him to avoid the discussion by which, after Arcite's death, the formal expressions of unwillingness of Emily and Palamon are overcome, and must otherwise, as well, be considered an improvement in the proper respect shown to Arcite's memory.

2987–3074. The homily of Theseus is drawn from Boethius, as Skeat pointed out. Other passages might be added to those cited from Skeat. The poet has been criticized for inserting this homily, though elsewhere so cleverly omitting whatever clogged and delayed the action, but its insertion is, in fact, justified as an argument by which the obstacle to the union of Palamon and Emily, caused by the tragic end of Arcite and then grief for him, is removed.

2987. **Firste Moevere.** God, as the primal source of the energy of the universe; so used in theology and philosophy, and not to be confused with the *Primum Mobile*, though suggested by it. **cause.** The effective cause, or

agency, of the motion of the universe (of which God is the "mover"), namely, the *Primum Mobile*, the outermost of the inner crystal spheres, which, according to the theories, modified at various periods, of the Greek philosophers and accepted generally as late as the seventeenth century, surrounded the earth. The eight inner spheres bore respectively the seven planets and the fixed stars. This outermost sphere supplied motion to others within it bearing the fixed stars and the planets. The use of *cause* is an unusual one. It may have been suggested by Chaucer's familiarity with the legal phrase of "moving" a "cause" or "case."

2988. Love is thus represented by Boethius as binding together into a unity of action and harmony of effect the contrary qualities of the elements. The figure of the chain may be from the *Romaunt of the Rose*, "La bele chaéne dorée qui les quatres elemens enlace," or some common source in medieval philosophy.

3042. Chaucer probably drew this new proverbial phrase, perhaps already proverbial, at least in French use, from the *Romaunt of the Rose*.

3089. "For gentle mercy ought to take precedence over strict justice," a doctrine urged also in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*.

Head-Link to Sir Thopas

[B. 1881–1901]

[The terms "head-link," "end-link," are applied to the passages describing what the pilgrims do and say, which link together the tales. This head-link was selected partly as a sufficiently good example of these passages, and partly because of its special interest as containing a portrait of Chaucer drawn by himself.

One must not suppose that Chaucer is paying himself a compliment in the last line. As a matter of fact he begins to recite what in form is a Northern romance in a characteristically elaborate verse form, which, though really a most delightful parody on the Northern romance, is of course supposed to be a genuine one and is represented as irritating the company, and the Host especially, beyond endurance by its "drasty speech." The Host breaks in and stops him, and Chaucer thereupon tells the long moral tale of Melibeus in prose.

Chaucer's description of himself as knowing no tale except a rime he learned long ago is wholly delightful as a humorous perversion of the truth. The entire portrait and the reception given his first attempt to please the company is an excellent example of Chaucer's frequent depreciation of himself, partly due to his enjoyment of the joke of it, partly inspired by the

modesty which, with consideration for others, lies at the root of all true courtesy and its outward expression in good manners.]

1881. **miracle.** Story of a miracle, a legend, namely the tale of the Prioress which has just been told.

1885. **"What man artow?"** "What manner of man art thou?"

1890. That is, both were stout.

1893. **elvish.** Skeat believed this to mean "elf-like, akin to the fairies; alluding to his absent looks and reserved manner." This sense is not, however, justified by the parallel passages he cites. The term implies likeness to the elves in one of two senses, either "petulant, peevish" or "tricksy, impish" (see the N. E. D.). The Host is merely rallying Chaucer, and probably uses the word in the first of these two senses: "He seemeth peevish by his behavior." It is to be noted that in giving up Skeat's definition, we need not give up our impression of Chaucer as abstracted, and happily occupied with his own thoughts, for that is implied in ll. 1886 f., and in the *House of Fame*, where he speaks of his life while at the customs.

The Nun's Priest's Tale

[B. 4011–4686]

[This little tale is one of the best examples of Chaucer's art, his ability to do a certain thing in precisely the right way. The description of the widow's house has been likened, as a bit of *genre* painting, to a masterpiece of the Dutch school. The effectiveness of the character and dialogue is carried to just the right degree of brilliancy to avoid destroying atmosphere. No better example could be found of the artistic restraint which led Chaucer to repress his wit, especially in satire, so as never to disturb or destroy the realistic basis of his story, the truth of its values in relation to the unity of the whole, its illusion to the reader as something sensibly and appealingly true. Take it in the way he delineates the cock and hen, his manner of attributing human traits to them. Chauntecleer the magnificent, with just a touch of bravado in his lordly pomp and fallible enough to be seriously disturbed by his evil dream, is withal a true gentleman, courteous and gallant; while he winces under his favorite wife's admonitions, overpowers her by his parade of learning, and takes his marital privilege of making a little fun of her, he is always careful not to hurt her feelings. Pertelote, on the other hand, is truly feminine; it is the very depth of her affection and solicitude which makes her barb her speech in attempting to relieve his mind and in rallying him upon the fear his dream inspires. Yet they remain for us a real cock and hen, though made so far human, partly because their humanization is not carried

too far, partly because[1] their attributive humanity is congruous with our interpretation of the appearance and actions of cocks and hens as we see them in the barnyard. It would have been so easy, by forcing the satire (effectively enough so far as the satire was concerned), to turn portraiture into caricature; we would have enjoyed the wit of the satire itself, but the characters employed would have become merely mechanical expedients, with loss of point and vitality to the satire itself. It is perhaps worth while here to call attention to the resemblance between Chaucer's Chauntecleer and Rostand's Chantecler; in his allegorical and satirical use of the cock and other animals Rostand is credited by those who have seen the play (it is not so plain in the play when read) with having avoided a similar danger.

To understand the full appeal of the story to medieval hearers, one must know something of its sources and historical relation. Stories of animals speaking and acting as if human beings are found in the folk lore of primitive peoples throughout the world. These are not, primarily, fables in the sense in which the word "fable" is most familiar to us — stories of animals used to point a moral as in the collections under the name of Æsop, or as told so charmingly by La Fontaine. They are stories told simply for amusement, like the negro stories of Uncle Remus, which (with different animals as the original characters) were brought over by the negroes from Africa. One common class includes stories how an animal of reputed sagacity (like Br'er Fox) is outwitted by an animal not thought of as shrewd, or whose special characteristic is an impish sense of fun (like Br'er Rabbit). A still broader class is of cases where an animal in danger gets free from his enemy by the use of some clever trick — the class to which Chaucer's story belongs. These popular stories of animals passed into literature from among the folk, and led to the invention of similar stories, and the use of them for satirical purposes. Most famous of all collections of such stories is the *Romance of Reynard*, often called the "beast epic," the central figure in which is the fox. Some of the stories in it are true folk tales, analogues to which are found through Europe and in the Orient, even in India; others are inventions, and the collection was made, in a spirit of genial satire, by an unknown writer of unknown date. It was immensely popular, and justly so, in France and Germany, — probably also in England, though there is no English version extant before Caxton's in the close of the fifteenth century.

The precise source of Chaucer's tale is not known. There are one or two rather striking resemblances to a version of the story by Marie de France, but these are due merely to a common tradition. Miss Petersen (*Radcliffe College Monographs*, No. 10), by a comparison of Chaucer's version with those in the French *Roman de Renart* and in the German *Reinecke Fuchs*, reached

[1] Compare Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, p. 215.

the conclusion that Chaucer's original was from a version nearer the extant German than the extant French version.

Miss Petersen has also pointed out how Chaucer adapts the tale to the teller by giving it, while careful not to go so far as to injure the telling of the tale which was his chief concern, some resemblance to the medieval sermon, with its rambling references to favorite topics and its use of stories at once moral and diverting.

In the text in this volume, the substance of the discourse of the cock on dream warnings which prove true is given in abstract. The summarizing of the passage is justified by the aim of this volume to bring into practicable limits a sufficient variety of Chaucer's works to enable the reader to gain a proper idea of his scope ; moreover, the point and effectiveness of the tale is not seriously diminished.]

4022. In more pretentious dwellings, the hall was the public living room, the bower the private rooms more especially for the ladies' use. The widow's lowly cottage had but one room probably, which was at once her "hall" and "bower."

4028–4029. Modern medicine cannot improve upon this.

4039. **Chauntecleer.** The traditional name for the cock in the beast epic of *Reynard the Fox* and in popular use, in reference to his clear song.

4041. **orgon.** A plural (Lat. neuter plural, *organa*), as *gon* in the next line shows. *organ*, with reference to its pipes, was commonly used in the plural, "the organs"; also later "pair" or "set of organs." Compare *bagpipes*, and see N.E.D.

4045–4048. The cock kept track of each degree of ascension of the equinoctial, and, as Skeat points out, crowed every hour, as 15° of the equinoctial make an hour.

4064–4069. The song referred to and quoted l. 4064 has been found by Skeat.

My lefe is faren in lond
Allas, why is she so ?
And I am so sore bound,
I may not come her to.
She hath my hert in hold,
Wherever she ride or go,
With trew love a thousand-fold.

4084. **me mette.** Impersonal, "it dreamed me." So used with the preterit like "me thought."

4104–4105. A conventional conjunction of qualities desirable in lovers and husbands.

4114. **fume.** Fumes or vapors from overeating or drinking, giving rise to depression and melancholy. **complecciouns.** See A. 411–444, note.

4118. A superfluity of red "choler," or red bile, causes dreams of evil things that are red; a superfluity of melancholy, or black bile (l. 4123), causes dreams of evil things that are black.

4353–4354. "For, as certain as 'In principio' ['In the beginning was the word,' etc., John, i, 1, *i.e.* 'as true as the Gospel'], 'woman is the confusion of man.'" After Pertelote's affectionate but somewhat sharp curtain lecture, Chauntecleer cannot resist citing this venerable gibe at her sex, mistranslating it, however, for her benefit, partly out of gallantry and partly for his own secret amusement.

4377. This belief, going back probably to Talmudic tradition, that the world was created in March, is frequently referred to in medieval theology; for example, in Bede, Ælfric, and the Old English *Martyrology*.

4380–4387. Skeat has pointed out that the reference to Taurus proves the day to be May 3. This raises a difficulty as regards "Since March began," as "thirty days and two" would be correct only when reckoning from the first of April — a difficulty recognized by the revision in the Harleian Ms. 7334, "Syn March bygan tway monthes and dayes two." The text follows Skeat in punctuating the phrase as parenthetical — as if "Since March began [and passed]" or "Since March began [the year]." But as Tatlock says (*The Harleian Manuscript 7334*, Chaucer Society 1909 for 1904), it may be a mere slip. "Chaucer usually becomes a trifle muddled and obscure when he tries these indirect, Dantesque methods of telling time."

4386–4387. Compare ll. 4045–4048, note. *Prime* is the first canonical hour (sunrise, or, conventionally, six), but the term was applied to the period running to *tierce*, and the close of this period, nine o'clock, was called "high prime."

4402–4403. The romance of Lancelot, describing his youth in a realm of the other world in the care of the Lady of the Lake and his love for Guinevere, forms part of the Arthurian cycle, and was one of the most famous and widely read courtly romances.

4405. **colfox.** Literally "coal-fox"; compare l. 4094 f.

4417–4419. Chaucer adduces other traitorous "homicides" — Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ; Ganelon, in the *Song of Roland*, who betrayed Roland, the most famous of the twelve peers of Charlemagne; Sinon, who persuaded the Trojans to bring the wooden horse into Troy, that led to its downfall.

4424–4441. Chaucer touches lightly here on a theological question which was the subject of bitter debate, predestination as over against absolute free will and salvation by merit. Augustine is the great St. Augustine of the fourth century. Thomas Bradwardine, Professor and Chancellor of Oxford, and Archbishop of Canterbury, a contemporary of Chaucer, in his *De Causa Dei Contra Pelagium*, opposed the Pelagian "heresy" of absolute free will.

"Boece" or Boethius (see HF. 972, note) discusses free will at length (Book V, prose 3). The question is one of the few, if not the only, purely theological question in which Chaucer discloses an interest (compare *Troilus*, iv, 960 ff.). It is a main theme in the beautiful *Pearl* by a contemporary of Chaucer.

4430. The figure is drawn from the sifting of grain after grinding till all the good flour is separated from the bran.

4435. **simple necessitee.** Single necessity, unconditional necessity, that is, absolute predestination, as distinguished from "necessitee condicionel" (l. 4440), or conditional necessity, which assumes limited freedom of the will.

4451. **counseil.** Object of *blame*.

4461. The Latin *Physiologus* of Theobaldus is referred to, one of numerous *physiologi* or bestiaries, which treat of fabulous habits and traits of animals, followed by an allegorical application in illustration and enforcement of Christian doctrine. The *physiologus* originated among Greek Christians (probably in Alexandria) and was widely popular in the Orient, in Africa, and throughout Europe. There is an Old English *Physiologus*, and one in Middle English based on Theobald's. The reference here is to the section "De Sirenis."

4484. In reference to the *De Musica* of Boethius; compare HF. ii, 789, note.

4502–4506. Burnel, an ass, is the hero of the famous satire of Nigel Wireker of Canterbury, *Burnellus*, or *Speculum Stultorum*, on monastic and other abuses of his time (twelfth century). It is a characteristic stroke of Chaucer's humor that he makes the fox quote the work as if by Burnel (a fellow animal), though Burnel is only its hero; also, at the same time, it may be added, achieving a pleasantry at the expense of the real author by their implied identification. The story in full is that the cock gets his revenge for the injury done him by crowing so late that the "priest's son," Gundulfus, does not wake up in time for his ordination, and so loses the benefice promised him.

4519. **Ecclesiaste.** The apochryphal Ecclesiasticus, xii.

4524. Skeat notes that the second son of Reynard in the beast-epic of *Reynard the Fox* is called Rosseel.

4529. **bemes.** Where they perched at night. Compare ll. 4074, 4362.

4536. Our word *Friday* is due to an early translation of the Latin *dies Veneris*, day of (the planet) Venus, with substitution of the Teutonic goddess Frigg (using her Scandinavian name), wife of Odin, for Venus. See N.E.D.

4537–4541. **Gaufred.** Geoffrey de Vinsauf, who, in his *Nova Poetria*, included the lament for Richard I referred to, which Chaucer's ironical praise justly ridicules.

4547–4549. *Æneid*, ii. 550–553.

4553–4558. Hasdrubal, king of Carthage, killed himself when the Romans burned Carthage, B.C. 146, and his wife, with her two sons, burned themselves.

4584–4586. The massacre of a number of Flemish merchants, objected to as alien competitors, was an incident of the troubles connected with the peasants' revolts in the so-called "rebellion of Jack Straw" in 1381. Skeat cites Walsingham in reference to the "clamor horrendissimus" of the rebels.

4635. **my Lord.** The Archbishop of Canterbury, the primate of England.

The Pardoner's Tale

[C. 661–968]

[The character of the Pardoner (p. 21) and the note upon it (p. 162) should be read before reading the *Tale*.

The prologue, in which this witty scoundrel tells of the arts he uses — by which Chaucer brings to instant judgment the abuse by which he and his fellows profit — admirable though it is, is too long for inclusion; its jeering irony is sufficiently illustrated by the passage with which the *Tale* concludes. But no volume of selections from Chaucer would be complete without the *Tale* itself, which the Pardoner extracts from his stock of *exempla*, — anecdotes, that is, with which the medieval preacher larded his discourse.

In the first place, the story is one of the highest intrinsic merit. In the second place, it possesses a special historic interest in that it is of great antiquity; in that it is found in many versions throughout the East, where it originated, and throughout Europe; in that it has been retold in modern times by Leigh Hunt and, from some Eastern version, by Kipling under the title "The King's Ancus" in the *Second Jungle Book;* and in that it will be undoubtedly told again in the future. In its historical relations, the tale of the *Wife of Bath*, with its many analogues and train of modern derivatives, is its only rival. In the third place, Chaucer has told it with the brevity and graphic force, — using the "impressionistic" method, as some would call it, — which its substance permits and enjoins. The figure of the old man, knocking upon the ground with his staff to be let in by Mother Earth, is left wholly unexplained and yet wholly explained; the very simplicity of the means employed, as in Hawthorne's stories, conveys a most convincing and impressive sense of the supernatural. In this incident Chaucer attained the highest range of imaginative art.

As an illustration of the wide variety of versions, and also of Chaucer's art in the special form which he gives his version, two variants of the story may be given; those who wish information concerning its Persian, Arabic, Thibetan, and European forms may consult Clouston's monograph published by the Chaucer Society. In a Buddhist version in the *Vedabbha Jâtaka*, two robbers, having come by a treasure, conceal it, and one remains to watch it, while the other takes rice to a village to get it cooked. When he returns,

the robber who remains on guard slays him, eats of the rice, and himself falls dead. In the Italian version of the *Cento Novelle*, which in minor details shows resemblances to Chaucer's and is doubtless connected with his original somewhat closely, a hermit, finding a store of gold in a cave, runs from it, and on his way meets three robbers. They ask him why he is running, and he says that Death is chasing him. They bid him show them Death, and he takes them to the cave. They call him a fool, and plan what they shall do. The rest of the story is substantially as in Chaucer. Chaucer's original is not known, but one is tempted to believe that the incident of the old man, as he tells it, is wholly his own.]

664. **belle.** The bell carried and rung before the body during a funeral.

679. **this pestilence.** See *Prologue*, A. 443, note. Boccaccio's story-tellers in the *Decameron* are refugees from the plague in a villa near Florence.

681–683. These lines make one think of the morality of *Everyman.*

692. **Goddes armes.** Oaths by the body or parts of the body of God or Christ were common for centuries (compare *zounds* from "God's wounds!"). Hence, in sermons against swearing, it is said that users of such oaths rent Christ's body anew. Compare l. 709, and at the beginning of the tale, ll. 472 ff. (in the portion omitted in this volume): —

> Their oaths are so great and so worthy of condemnation,
> That it is grisly for to hear them swear;
> Our blessed Lord's body they tear asunder;
> They think the Jews rent him not enough.

697–704. See A. 1131, note.

709. See note on l. 692.

713. **old man.** The "old man" corresponds to the hermit of the Italian story. But, as Skeat notes, Chaucer, in making him seek Death, instead of fleeing from him, like the hermit, adds greatly to the impressiveness of the incident. See also the prefatory note.

727–733. Kittredge has pointed out that these lines are imitated from the first elegy of Maximian.

729. **modres.** The earth as mother (*genetrix* in Maximian) of all things.

734. **cheste.** The chest which stood in the medieval bedchamber for storing a person's most valued possessions.

736. **heyre clout.** A hair-cloth rag (for a shroud).

743–744. **Agayns.** In the presence of. The text is "*Coram cano capite, consurge*," "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head," Leviticus, xix, 32.

770. The English florin was worth 6*s.* 8*d.* As Skeat points out, the mention of florins is in keeping with the Italian character of the story.

781. "Lightly come, lightly go."

793. See A. 835, note.

819. "Shall it be secret between us?"

866. "Than thou would'st go in walking no more than a mile"; that is, twenty minutes, at three miles to the hour, the usual reckoning.

871. **of.** Not in manuscripts. Skeat's emendation.

889. **Avicen.** Avicenna; see A. 432.

890. Avicenna's *Book of the Canon in Medicine* is divided into books and "fens" in the Latin version, *fen* being the Arabic *fann*, "class," hence, "section." Skeat notes that Chaucer assumes *cánon* to be used in its ordinary sense of "rule," whereas it is the title of the whole of Avicena's work as a comprehensive treatment of its subject.

895–945. Some critics have assumed that the Pardoner forgets himself, and proceeds to exhort his hearers seriously at the close, as if one of his usual audiences. But the spirit of the passage is the same as the prologue — one of jesting irony.

The House of Fame

[The general character of the *House of Fame*, and the fact that it remotely represents the influence of Dante, have been briefly touched upon in the Introduction, p. xxii. Though a love vision in form and intention, it is far from being conventional in spirit or substance. It has an additional interest in that, in it, Chaucer is at a farther remove from his sources than usual, combines elements of dissimilar kinds to a new unity, achieves originality in invention, where elsewhere his originality is one of superiority of treatment. In the *Squire's Tale* we have, possibly, the beginning of what is practically an original invention, but, unfortunately, that tale is only just begun and no more.

The second book is selected for this volume despite the picture of the supplicants before the throne of Fame and the fascinating wicker house which give distinction to the third book. The description of Chaucer's journey to the skies in the claws of the eagle, and his converse with that pragmatical and condescending bird, is one of the most striking and delightful illustrations of the poet's humor; also it is hoped that the reader will be led by his interest in adventures so auspiciously begun to read for himself the third book instead of the abstract furnished.

The four-stress couplet used in the poem was also used in the *Book of the Duchess*. Later, he gave up this verse for the five-beat line in stanzas in *Troilus and Cressida* and elsewhere, and in the famous "heroic couplet" of the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Canterbury Tales*.

Into the fascinating subject of the sources of the eagle as "helpful animal" (see the notes), and of the whirling house of wickerwork, in folklore and literature, there is no space to go here. For this and for other information

concerning the poem, the reader is referred to the invaluable monograph of W. O. Sypherd, *Studies on Chaucer's House of Fame*, Chaucer Society, 2d Series, 39.]

488. **Libye.** Libya.

501. Chaucer had several excellent precedents for his use of the eagle as the means by which he is carried in his vision to the upper air. He knew the story of Ganymede (see l. 589), the beautiful youth who was borne to heaven by Jupiter himself in the form of an eagle. He may have known one of the legendary adventures of Alexander in which Alexander is transported to the upper air on an eagle's back; Alexander is mentioned in l. 915 as having visited the upper air, but Chaucer may merely have known of another account (in the *Wars of Alexander*, l. 5523; see Skeat's note) in which the carrying was done in a car borne by griffins.

In the *Purgatory* (ix, 19 ff.) Dante dreams that he is snatched up by an eagle to the orb of fire, and Chaucer uses the passage (see below). Also, in folk tales, birds or other animals frequently carry persons on journeys, or otherwise help them in various ways.

In the poem the eagle, as the bird of Jove, serves as Jove's messenger (ll. 605 ff.) to convey Chaucer to the House of Fame, he serves as his guide (a guide or conductor, or person with whom a conversation is held, is a traditional feature in the use of the dream as a literary mode), and in the third book of the poem he acts as the "helpful animal" in enabling him to enter the revolving house of twigs. See Sypherd's admirable discussion, with much fresh and interesting material, in his monograph referred to in the prefatory note.

For the description of the eagle and his descent upon the poet (ll. 496–508, 534–544), Chaucer is indebted in certain details to Dante (*Purgatory*, ix, 19 ff). The passage in Longfellow's translation (used also in later references below) is as follows: —

In dreams it seemed to me I saw suspended
An eagle in the sky with plumes of gold,
With wings wide open, and intent to stoop;
And this, it seemed to me, was where had been
By Ganymede his kith and kin abandoned,
When to the high consistory he was rapt.

I thought within myself, perchance he strikes
From habit only here, and from elsewhere
Disdains to bear up any in his feet.
Then wheeling somewhat more, it seemed to me,
Terrible as the lightning he descended
And snatched me upward even to the fire.

514–516. Chaucer appropriately cites famous dreamers of antiquity. Three are from the Bible — Isaiah (see Isaiah, chapters i, vi), Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel, chapters ii, iv), and Pharaoh (Genesis, chapter xli). Turnus in the *Æneid* (ix, 6) was visited in a dream by Iris as the messenger of Juno. The dream of Scipio is related in the *Somnuim Scipionis*, originally a part of Cicero's *De Republica*, but known only as preserved in a commentary upon it by Macrobius. This work had great celebrity in the Middle Ages. Chaucer refers to it five times, gives an abstract of it in the proem to the *Parliament of Birds*, and indeed there represents Scipio as serving as his own guide. The work relates how younger Scipio Africanus, having talked with Massinissa, king of Numidia, concerning his adoptive grandfather, Scipio Africanus the elder, dreamed that the great Africanus showed him (compare l. 916) from the height of heaven Carthage and the earth, the nine spheres (see A. 2987, note); caused him to hear the "harmony of spheres" (each sphere having its characteristic note blending with those of the others); and discoursed to him of immortality and other high matters.

The unfamiliarity of the form of many proper names in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English literature, here illustrated, is due to their transferal, directly, or with slight changes, from foreign sources. *Nabugodonosor* is from the *Nabuchodonosor* of the Vulgate, *Joves* (l. 586) is a French nominative form, *Parnaso* (l. 521) is the Italian *Parnaso*, *Elicon* (l. 522) is from the Italian *Elicona*.

513. **selly.** The manuscripts read *sely*. This and other helpful emendations of the poem are due to Skeat.

518. **faire blisful.** Fair, blissful one. **Cipris.** Cyprian; that is, Venus, so called because of her temple, and the special worship paid her, in Cyprus.

520. **ye.** The Muses, fabled to dwell with Apollo in Mount Parnassus (l. 521) in central Greece. Chaucer, in invoking the Muses and Thought, imitates Dante (*Inferno*, ii, 7–9): —

> O Muses, O high genius, now assist me!
> O memory, that didst write down what I saw.
> Here thy nobility should be manifest.

522. **Elicon.** Properly a mountain in Bœotia, sacred to the Muses, but misinterpreted by Chaucer as a fountain owing to a passage in Dante ("Now Helicon must needs pour forth for me," *Purgatory*, xxix, 40). This reference of Chaucer's led through Skelton and Spenser to frequent references to Helicon as a fountain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

562. Chaucer here no doubt refers humorously to his wife's voice as unwelcome (so even the dearest voice may be) when calling him in the morning. The passage, absurdly enough, has been cited as evidence that they were not happy together.

588–592. Chaucer now appropriately refers to famous persons translated to heaven: Enoch (Genesis, v, 24), Elijah (2 Kings, ii, 11), Romulus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xiv, 824), and Ganymede (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, x, 160). Holthausen (*Anglia*, xvi, 265) cites a passage in the *Ecloga Thoduli*, where Enoch, Elias, and Ganymede are spoken of together. He thinks Chaucer must have known it, as it says that to Ganymede was given the title of *pincerna*, "cupbearer, butler," which Hebe before possessed, whence Chaucer's phrase "the goddes boteler," l. 592.

As Bell notes, Chaucer is not making fun in calling Ganymede the gods' butler. It was the medieval custom for young men of rank to carve and serve wine in their fathers' or other houses where they received their training. The name of Butler, he points out, is borne by one of the noble familes of England, and Skeat instances the royal name Stuart, meaning steward. We may recall that the Squire in the *Prologue* "carved before his father at the table."

615. Chaucer might truly represent himself as having served Cupid attentively through his love poems. No doubt we have only a part of his poems written in deference to the sentimental code of love service in fashion in his day. But we may be sure his devotion to this theme had, at all times, no doubt, a touch of lightness and mockery — and, later, after writing the *Troilus and Cressida*, he describes himself in the *Legend of Good Women* as rebuked by the god for having written in love's dispraise.

618. Skeat's emendation.

623. One meaning of *cadence* with reference to verse (see Skeat's note, and the *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. *cadence*) is a certain harmonious quality of rhythmical flow. But this is not the sense here. The passage demands a meaning of a kind to be set off against *rime*. A chapter of Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, II ch. vii (viii) (Arber, 1869, p. 93) affords the key. *Rime* here means concord of the concluding syllables or monosyllables of lines (as *man*, *can*, 509, 510; *aright*, *might*, 527, 528), *cadence*, the concord of two or more syllables (*mette*, *shette*, 523, 524, *dissimulaciouns*, *reparaciouns*, 687, 688).

632–660. Chaucer here describes his life at the time the poem was written — his busy days at the customs followed by evenings spent among his books. This and certain other passages have been used to force an allegorical significance into the poem as an expression of bitterness at a mode of life which prevents his realization of poetic fame. But this view is a mistaken one, and has been finally and conclusively disposed of by Sypherd. The tone of the poem throughout is one of gayety and good humor.

681. A proverbial expression. A person may fall as unexpectedly by accident ("casually") into love, as a blind man walking in the fields may start up a hare.

683. **of stele.** "True as steel."

689–691. "And more beards made (dressed) in two hours." The phrase "to make a person's beard," in origin French and Italian, means to trick or outwit him.

695. love-dayes. See A. 285, note.

703. pyes. Magpies, as being proverbial for their noisy chatter, and as repeating, when taught to speak, what they happen to hear.

712–715. Ovid, referred to as Chaucer's "owne book," because he quotes it continually, or perhaps, as Skeat says truly is probable, because he owned a copy. The passage concerning the House of Fame is in the *Metamorphoses*, xii, 39–63. Ovid describes its position thus:

> Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque
> Cœlestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi.

724. "Go," as often in Middle English, is omitted after "must."

725. The explanation of the eagle which follows possesses interest as an illustration of medieval science, but this counts for little as compared with one's enjoyment of Chaucer's humor. The solemnity and pomposity of the eagle, his condescension and anxiety to make his point clear to the ignorant person he is carrying, his repetition of the word "kyndly" and obvious satisfaction in the way it cleans up all difficulties, are irresistible.

729. The theory of the inclination of everything in nature to move to an appointed place in obedience to its nature, often adduced in medieval science, Chaucer takes from Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book iii, prose 11, (see note on l. 972) together with the illustrations used in proof of it. Skeat, who points out this passage, also cites Dante's reference to the theory when Beatrice explains to the poet how it was possible for him, in fulfillment, not as would seem in contradiction, of natural law, to be raised to Paradise (*Paradiso*, i, 109): —

> In the order that I speak of are inclined
> All natures, by their destinies diverse,
> More or less near unto their origin;
> Hence they move onward unto ports diverse
> O'er the great sea of being ; and each one
> With instinct given it which bears it on.

759. It is often assumed that Chaucer here mentions Aristotle and Plato merely at large as impressive names. But both are cited with a purpose — cf. Aristotle, *De Cœlo*, IV, 3, and Plato, *Timæus* (Stevens), p. 63, B–E.

789. Skeat points out that Chaucer derived this illustration either directly, or through Vincent de Beauvais in his *Speculum Naturale* (xxxv, 58), from Boethius, in his treatise *De Musica* (i, 14).

827. **the mansioun.** Skeat's admirable emendation for *sum place stide, som styde, some stede;* see ll. 754, 831.

846. See note on ll. 712–715.

868. **biles.** The learned bird speaks in character, it will be seen; so also *top and tail*, 880, may here have a special humorous appropriateness.

872. Skeat's emendation.

888. Dante, *Paradiso*, xxiii, 128 : —

> Look down once more, and see how vast a world
> Thou hast already put beneath thy feet.

896. **gan.** The manuscripts read *gan to* or *to;* Skeat's emendation.

911. **toun.** Skeat's emendation for *token.* Cf. l. 890.

915. **Alexander Macedo.** Alexander of Macedon. See l. 501, note.

916. **king.** One like a king, kingly leader of men. See l. 501, note.

919–924. The familiar story in classical mythology of the escape of Dædalus and his son from Crete.

929–934. Skeat has explained Chaucer's use of the word *citizein* with reference to the "eyrish bestes" as borrowed from the Latin poem *Anticlaudianus* of Alanus de Insulis (cited l. 986), who makes a similarly curious use of *cives* in the phrases *vagantes aerios cives*, "airy citizens as they wander" (in which *aerios* suggested *eyrish*, and *vagantes* line 934) and *Hic cives habitant*, "Here the citizens dwell," which corresponds to lines 929–930 (Wright *Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets*, 338, 360).

In the second of these passages Alanus speaks of the "republic of the sky," and Skeat thinks this with the use of the word *citizein* was sufficient to bring Plato's *Republic* to Chaucer's mind, whereupon, with the delight in citing authorities characteristic of medieval authors, the poet at once made an off-hand reference to him. The real fact is, however, that Chaucer is justified in quoting Plato, because of Plato's description of the heavens in the myth of Er in the tenth book of the *Republic*, of which Chaucer could have learned possibly in some commentary on the first meter of book iv of Boethius (from which he quotes, ll. 973 ff.), which goes back to Plato.

932. **eyrish bestes.** The constellations, as including many beasts (compare ll. 1004 ff.).

934. **Bothe goon and also flee.** "Both walk and fly" — as there are both beasts and birds.

936–939. **the Galaxy.** The Milky Way. The Greek name *Galaxy*, and the Latin *Via Lactia* of which the English name is a translation (first recorded in this passage according to the N. E. D. D.V. *Galaxy*) have primary reference to its whiteness, but in many countries its likeness to a way or road has caused the names of well-known or imaginary roads to be applied to it — for example, in

Italy, "the Roman road" (*la strada di Roma*), and, in England, "Watling Street" after the Great Roman Road stretching from Dover by London to Chester and beyond.

940–959. Chaucer follows Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ii, 32–328, in telling the familiar story how Phæthon drove the chariot of the sun in place of his father Phœbus.

948. **Scorpioun.** The Scorpion, a constellation and one of the signs of the Zodiac.

666–969. Perhaps suggested, as Skeat notes, by a passage in the *Anticlaudianus* in which Alanus (see l. 986, note) speaks of the clouds, waters, hail, winds, and thunder as formed in the airy expanse of the sky.

972. **Boece.** Boethius, the famous Roman philosopher (born *circa* 480, died 524) was imprisoned by Theodoric as one of the members of the Senate who were endeavoring to restore the ancient liberties of Rome. In his prison he wrote the *Consolation of Philosophy*, a work which exercised a profound influence throughout Europe in medieval and even into modern times. King Alfred, Chaucer himself, and Queen Elizabeth are numbered among its English translators, and Chaucer cites from him frequently. Chaucer in his translation renders the passage here paraphrased as follows (book iv, metre i: from Skeat's edition): "I have, forsothe, swifte fetheres that surmounten the heighte of hevene. Whan the swifte thought hath clothed it-self in the fetheres, it despyseth the hateful erthes, and surmounteth the roundnesse of the grete ayr; and it seeth the cloudes behinde his bak."

985. **Marcian.** Martian, a Latin satirist of the fifth century, treated astronomy among the seven sciences in his *De Nuptiis Philologiæ et Mercuri.*

986. Alanus de Insulis (died 1205) was author of two works cited by Chaucer, the *Anticlaudianus* here referred to (compare notes on l. 929–934, 966–969) and the *De Planctu Naturæ*, to which there is a reference in the *Parliament of Birds.*

992–999. Chaucer's interest in astronomy has been referred to above (see A. 8, note). The eagle's offer and Chaucer's refusal are, of course, only introduced to give liveliness to his light and humorous description of his journey. The reference to his age is merely in joke, but the passage has been used in arguments concerning both the date of his birth and the date of the poem. He was nearing the age of forty if the poem is to be set, as seems probably right, in the late seventies.

1003. **him or here.** The mythical personages, of both sexes, among the constellations.

1004–1007. Chaucer drew much of his knowledge concerning the constellations, probably, from the *Fasti* of his favorite poet Ovid. The constellations here referred to are Corvus, the Crow or "Raven," placed in heaven, Ovid

says, with the Serpent and the Goblet, because when sent by Phœbus to get water he delayed that he might enjoy the fruit of a fig tree when it ripened and then returned with a serpent, which he said was the cause of his delay; Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, the Great and the Little Bear, not mentioned by Ovid, the stars of which are more familiar to Americans as forming the Dipper; Lyra, the lyre of the famous harper of classical mythology, Arion; Gemini, representing the twins, Castor and Pollux, the sons of Jupiter and Leda; Delphinus, the Dolphin, placed in the sky either because he saved Arion when Arion leapt from a ship to escape from the sailors who would have taken his life as well as his treasure, or, as Ovid also tells, because of help rendered to Neptune; and the Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione. The form of the name Atlas which Chaucer uses, *Athalante*, Skeat explains as due to misunderstanding of the ablative, *Atlante*, in Ovid (book v, l. 83), but Chaucer is more probably using the Italian form.

1021. **up the heed.** "Up with your head."

1022. St. Julian, according to the legend concerning him, in penance for having accidentally slain his parents, established a house for wayfarers near a dangerous ford, and thus became the patron saint of travelers and of hospitality. Compare the *Prologue*, l. 340. The line perhaps represents a current exclamation of travelers on nearing an inn.

1034. **Peter.** St. Peter. The name is used as an exclamation in the same way as that of St. Julian above, and of St. Clare below.

1066. Saint Clare (1191–1253) was an Italian saint, a disciple of St. Francis and founder of the Order of Poor Clares.

A Treatise of the Astrolabe

Prologus

[The following example of Chaucer's prose is selected because it is wholly his own and not a translation or adaptation, and also because of the charming way in which he dedicates his treatise to the use of his little ten-year-old son Louis. Of Louis nothing is known. He may have been in the Oxford schools, as the astrolabe his father gave him was of the latitude of Oxford. The date assumed for the treatise is 1391, as that date enters into two of the solutions of problems.

The astrolabe was an instrument for taking altitudes and for the solution of astronomical problems. It varied in form as adapted to special uses, and through elaboration as the knowledge of astronomy increased. It consisted essentially of a heavy plate of metal attached by a swivel to a ring which permitted it to hang from the thumb in a perpendicular position. The "back"

was inscribed with graduated circles for the quadrants, signs of the zodiac, days of the year, months, and saints' days. Over this, on a central pin, revolved the "ruler," a metal bar fitted with sights for taking altitudes. The "front" of the plate had a thick rim with graduated circles for the hours and for the quadrant; the part of the plate within the rim bore circles for the tropics and the equinoctial, and in addition subsidiary rings or plates could be fitted within the depression indicating the position of important stars. At the front a bar called the "label" revolved on the central pin. By means of this instrument, with its additional appliances, a number of astronomical problems could be solved, for example, the degree of the zodiac for a special day, altitude of the sun, hour of the day, duration of twilight, declination of degrees in the zodiac, latitude of a place by the altitude of the Pole-star, etc. See for a detailed description, Skeat, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3, lxxiii ff.

The body of the treatise seems to be taken from Messahala, an Arabian astronomer, in a Latin version, or from some intermediate version.

Chaucer's interest in astronomy and love for astronomical references has already been referred to, see A. 8, HF., 992–999, notes.]

1. Possibly Cicero, *Laelius*, cap. xiii, according to Skeat. But the passage cited bears only a general resemblance to Chaucer's quotation.

2. Skeat explains that in Louis's instrument the circles of altitude were drawn at distances of two degrees, whereas in better instruments they were drawn at intervals of one degree.

3. The five parts gave, or were to have given (we have not the whole, despite numerous manuscripts still extant) (1) a description of the instrument, (2) the method of using it, (3) tables of latitude and longitude of fixed stars, etc., (4) a description of the motions of the moon and other heavenly bodies, (5) a statement of the general rules of astronomical theory, with tables of equations of houses, dignities of planets, and other useful things.

Chaucer's Words unto Adam his own Scrivener

[This epigram, addressed in remonstrance to Adam his scrivener, or copyist, by Chaucer, gives one a graphic idea of the vexations of the medieval author consequent upon the reproduction of his works by hand. When one reflects that the only way to insure faithfulness in the copies produced under the author's oversight was for the author personally to go over each copy, the labors attending the correction of modern proof sheets for an indefinite number of copies pale to nothing by comparison.

The extant manuscripts of Chaucer's works afford ample testimony of the "negligence and haste," the blundering ignorance, and the unwarrantable alterations of many of the copyists. One scarcely wonders, for even with

the most conscientious care it is a difficult thing to make a faithful copy, or to insure accuracy even in a printed text — witness the numerous errors that have crept into the works of modern poets.]

2. The reference to the *Boethius* and to *Troilus and Cressida* seems to indicate that the epigram was written shortly after the production of these works.

6. Chaucer has been forced not merely to correct it as it stands, but even to make erasures for the necessary corrections.

To Rosamund. A Balade

[Chaucer, we know, wrote many brief love poems. Some of those which are still extant, while showing his usual technical skill, are conventional in conception and expression. This balade, however, is different. It is a bit of playful gallantry, conceived in the spirit of what we now call, rather unfortunately, "society verse." The poet does full justice to the charms of Rosamund, and pays her very pretty compliments, which are intended to please her; but, while representing himself as overwhelmed by her charms despite her indifference, he roguishly makes fun of it all by his exaggerations and amusing comparisons in ll. 9, 17, 20.

The poem is in the French form of the *balade*. Note that three rimes only run through all three stanzas in a fixed order, and that each stanza ends with the same line, called the "refrain." There is no "envoy," or conventional concluding stanza of special form, as is customary (see the *Complaint to His Empty Purse* below). Chaucer was also fond of another French poem form, the roundel. These and other French forms (for example, the rondeau and villanelle) have been revived by modern English poets, under French inspiration, both for light and serious verse; see the works of Swinburne and especially Austin Dobson, and the collection *Ballades, Roundels, etc.*, made by Gleason White.

1. **Madame.** Three syllables.

2. **mappemounde.** Maps of the world were not only drawn in books and in the form of charts, but also depicted in large paintings in round form to hang upon the wall. The so-called Round Table of King Arthur in Winchester may originally have been a "mappemounde." The word supplies Chaucer with an excellent and piquant rime.

11. **out-twyne.** Untwine, spin out; a delightful word to express Rosamund's charming (no doubt coquettish) way of consciously modulating her voice.

20. **Tristram.** The hero of the famous romance *Tristram and Iseult*, one of the most famous lovers of medieval tradition.

The Complaint of Chaucer to His Empty Purse

[Chaucer was often embarrassed for money, as anticipation of his pensions at various times proves. This poem may have been written earlier, as Skeat thinks (see l. 17, note), but the envoy to Henry IV, to whom Chaucer might with confidence apply as the son of his special patron and, probably, kinsman by marriage, John of Gaunt, was certainly written in 1399, when Henry came to the throne (see l. 22 note). Chaucer's plea, as its delightful humor merited, produced the desired effect; the king made him a grant, in addition to the pensions he had, of forty marks yearly, which, unfortunately, the poet did not long enjoy, as he died in the following year. The envoy, if not the whole poem, is the last work, possibly, which we have from Chaucer's hand.]

4. Note the delightful play on words in the phrase "hevy chere."

16. **as . . . here.** "So far as this world is concerned."

17. **toune.** The meaning is not quite clear (though, as Skeat notes, it seems to be, "Help me out of this [expensive] town,") because of the connection of this line with l. 18 following. It would seem as if the lines meant that, as the purse was not willing to act as his treasurer, *i.e.* provide him with money, it must itself help him out of town by being pawned. If this is so, it would be a further support for Skeat's inference from ll. 8, 17, that the poem was written earlier in the poet's life in some special emergency, and was merely adapted by additon of the envoy for voicing his plea to Henry.

22–24. Albion is a traditional name for England in the old histories and chronicles following Geoffrey of Monmouth. Geoffrey, on the basis of earlier histories (of Nennius and his predecessors) and Celtic tradition, told the reputed early history of Britian with the intent to make of Arthur a great king worthy of comparison with, and indeed greater than, Charlemagne, the central figure of early French history and romance. According to Celtic tradition Brutus, the great grandson of Æneas, forced to leave Italy because of his having accidentally killed his father, landed in Britian and with his follower gave rise to the Britons, the land and the people taking their names from his. This tradition was adopted by the English of mixed race after the Conquest, and became a part of orthodox English tradition. It was as welcome a belief to them, as to the Celts, that they could claim relationship with the famous Trojan line. The name of Brutus became in French and English, as here, Brut or Brute, and as the founder of the British race, gave title to chronicles in French and English, as, for example, the *Roman de Brut* of Wace and the *Brut* of Layamon.

Henry IV was a conqueror of England only as having usurped the crown. He certainly was not true king "by line," having no hereditary right to the

throne, though he was by "election" of Parliament. As Parliament confirmed his title on September 30, and the grant to Chaucer was made October 3, the envoy can be dated, as Skeat says, almost to a day.

Truth

Balade of Good Counsel

[There are many passages throughout Chaucer that show the ethical soundness and wholesomeness of Chaucer's nature, his respect for what is honest and right, his wisdom both worldly and unworldly. In this *Balade of Good Counsel*, to give it its proper name, Chaucer sums his experience of life, the refuge against the sleights of fortune and the slants of envy to be found in contentment with what is one's own "though it be small," the uselessness of trying to redress all that is wrong, the gospel, all-sufficing, of doing one's own work well, — whatever it may be, — fleeing the ambitions of the crowd and dwelling with truth, holding the highway and following the leading of the spirit, since this world is not home, but is only wilderness. It has often been pointed out that, because Chaucer was so truly an artist, he was no reformer. As Root has well added of this noble poem (*The Poetry of Chaucer*, p. 30) and its "Catholic" temper, "Reformers may rail at this spirit as they please, but they cannot prove that it is weak or base."

No direct source for the poem as a whole or in part has been found. There are certain similarities to passages in Boethius, but the resemblance is so remote as to be hardly worth noting.]

2. **Suffice unto thy good.** It seems only right to follow the reading of the majority of the manuscripts, as Skeat does, though the phrase is without parallels or analogies. The sense is plain from the following line, "Let thy goods, or wealth, suffice thee," or, more closely, "Let your life suffice you in proportion to your goods," that is, as Skeat says, "Cut your coat according to your cloth."

6. **that.** "Thou that." So similarly in l. 13.

7. Compare John, viii, 32, "The truth shall make you free." *Delivere* is used absolutely with the indirect object understood, "grant deliverance."

11. **sporne ageyn an al.** Compare the biblical "kick against the pricks."

19. "Know thy true country; look up, thank God for all."

22. The envoy is in only one manuscript, but, as Skeat says, there is no reason to doubt its genuineness. **vache.** Skeat explains this rather strange term of reproach as carrying out the metaphor in l. 18, and as an allusion to the fact that the cow, characteristically, is continually looking towards the earth instead of the sky. Chaucer may have been led to its use also because of the comparison by Boethius of various types of wicked men to animals.

GLOSSARY

[This Glossary includes (as is usual in volumes of Chaucer) only words and senses which are not readily recognizable. It was also thought advisable to include all proper names (except those familiarly known).

A single reference is given under each word to its first occurrence, that the student may check his command of a vocabulary. The references to the *Canterbury Tales* are by group and line (see the Introduction, p. xxx). The other abbreviations used are HF, *House of Fame;* TA, *Treatise of the Astrolabe;* Adam, *Chaucer's Words to Adam;* Comp. Purse, *Complaint of Chaucer to his Empty Purse.*

As explained in the Preface, there is no point in indicating the parts of speech, or adding scattered etymological notes. All that is necessary is to give a list of forms under certain verbs.]

a, ah! oh! A 1078.
abiden, abyden (pret. *abood*), await, A 927.
abood, waiting, delay, A 965.
aboughte, paid for, atoned for, A 2303.
abreyden, awake, arouse, HF 559.
abyden, *see* **abiden**.
abyen, atone for, pay for, C 756.
achat, purchase, buying, A 571.
achatour, buyer, caterer, steward, A 568.
acorden, agree, assent, A 818.
Adoun, Adonis, A 2224.
adrad, adread, HF 928.
advertence, attention, HF 709.
affray, affright, HF 553.
affrayed, frightened, B 4468.
affylen, file, polish, A 712.
afounde, foundered, lamed, *To Rosemounde*, 21.
ago, gone, A 2802.
al, awl, *Truth*, 11.
al, altogether, A 248; *al be*, although, A 297.
al-day, every day, A 1168.
alaunt, a large dog for hunting, wolfhound, A 2148.
ale-stake, A 667 (*see* note).
algate, at any rate, nevertheless; no matter what happened, HF 943.
Algezir, Algeciras, A 57.
Alisaundre, Alexandria, A 51.
aller, of all; *our aller*, of us all, A 823.
also, so, HF 576.
Amazones, the Amazons, A 880.
amblere, ambling horse, A 469.
Amphioun, Amphion, A 1546.
anlas, a broad, two-edged dagger with a sharp point, A 357.
Antonius, Antony, A 2032.
apairen, impair; become or be impaired, be harmed, HF 756.
apalled, lessened, A 3053.
aperte, openly, HF 717.
apertenen, appertain, TA.
apparaillinge, preparation, A 2913.
appetyt, appetite, desire, A 1670.

apyked, adorned, A 365.
areste, areest, arrest; confinement, A 1310; *maad areest*, seized, B 4090.
aresten, check, pull up, A 827.
arm-greet, as thick as one's arm, A 2145.
armed up, fully armed, A 1852.
armee, naval expedition, A 60.
armes, arms, coat of arms; *in oon armes*, bearing the same arms em blazoned on their shields or surcoats, A 1012.
armipotente, powerful in arms, A 1982.
arn, are, HF 1008.
a-roume, in the open, at large, HF 540.
arrerage, arrears, A 602.
arrest, the "rest" for couching the butt of the spear before charging for attack, A 2602.
arreste, *see* **areste**.
arreten, ascribe; *narette*, ascribe not, A 726.
Artoys, Artois, A 86.
arwe, arrow, A 107.
as for me, so far as I am concerned, A 1619.
as nouthe, just now, A 462.
ascendent, the degree of the zodiacal circle just rising above the eastern horizon at any moment, A 417.
asp, aspen, A 2921.
aspect, A 1087 (*see* note).
aspyen, spy, find out, A 1420.
assayen, try, test, A 1811.
assegen, besiege, A 881.
assent, agreement, covenant, C 758.
assenten, agree to, approve of, A 374.
assoiling, absolution, A 661.
assuren, insure, A 926.
asterten, escape, A 1592.
astrolabie, TA (*see* note).
astrologiens, astronomers, TA.
asweved, mazed, dazed, HF 549.
athamaunt, adamant, A 1305.
Athenes, Athens, A 861.
at-reden, out-rede, surpass in counsel, A 2449.
at-rennen, outrun, A 2449.
atte, atten, at the, to the, A 29 [A. S. *æt thæm*].
attempre, temperate, B 4028.
Atthalante, Atalanta, A 2069.
Attheon, Actæon, A 2064.
auditour, auditor (a person appointed to check accounts to see if they are correct), A 594.
Augustyn, St. Augustine, A 4431.
Austin, St. Augustine, A 187.
auter, altar, A 1905.
avauntour, boaster, B 4107.
aventure, chance, luck, A 25.
Averrois, Averroes, A 433.
avisioun, vision, HF 513.
avow, vow, A 2237.
Avycen, Avicen, A 432.
ayel, grandfather, A 2477.
axen, ask, call for, A 1739.

bacheler, bachelor, a candidate for knighthood, A 80.
Baldeswelle, Bawdeswelle, A 620.
balled, bald, A 2518
barre, a bar of metal or ornamental device, on a girdle or belt, into which the tongue of the buckle fitted, A 329.
batailled, embattled, B 4050
bauderie, wantonness, A 1926.
bawdrik, belt or strap over the shoulder to carry a horn, etc., at the side, A 116.
beau, fair, HF 643.
beggestere, beggar, properly a beggar woman, A 242.
beheste, commands; *performen hir behestes*, attain or fulfill what their statement calls for, TA 2.

Belmarye, Benamarin, A 57.
beme, horn, B 4588.
Beneit, Benedict, A 173.
bente, slope covered with grass, A 1981.
Bernard, Bernardus Gordonius, A 434.
Berwik, Berwick, A 692.
beste, beast, animal, creature, HF 932.
beste, best, *atte beste*, *to the beste*, in the best way, A 29.
bet, better; *go bet*, go quickly, C 667.
beten, beat, HF 1044.
beten (pt. *beete*, pp. *beten*, *ybete*), beat, beat out, hammer, A 2162; set the air beating, HF 1041.
beten, mend, tend, kindle, A 2253.
betid, happened, HF 578.
bi-bledde, drenched with blood, A 2002.
bidden (3 pers. pr. *biddeth*, *bit*, pret. *bad*, *bade*, past part. *bidde*, *bede*), ask, beg, beseech; also (through confusion with *beden*), command, A 187.
biform, before, A 100.
bihoten, promise, A 1854.
biknowen, acknowledge, A 1557.
biraft, taken away, A 1361.
biseken, beseech, A 918.
biset, established, fixed, A 3012.
bisetten, employ, A 279.
bisinesse, business, care, trouble, A 520.
bismotered, soiled, A 76.
bit, biddeth, A 187; *see* **bidden**.
blankmanger, blancmange, a dish of "chicken, or other meat, with cream, rice, almonds, sugar, eggs, etc.," A 387.
blenden (3 pers. pr. *blent*), blind, deceive, *Truth* 4.
bleynte, blenched, grew pale, A 1078.
blowen, blow; utter, send forth, A 2512.
blyve, quickly, A 2697.
Boece, Boethius, A 4432.
bokeler, buckler, A 112.
bole, bull, A 2139.
Boloigne, Boulogne, A 465.
bon, good; *bon hostel*, a good hostelry, good lodging, HF 1022.
boras, borax, A 630.
bord, table, A, 52.
borwe, pledge; *to borwe*, in pledge, A 1621.
borwen, give security for, obtain on pledge, C 871.
boteler, butler, HF 592.
bouc, bouk, abdomen, paunch, A 2746.
bourde, jest, C 778.
bracer, guard for the arm, A 111.
Bradwardyn, Bradwardine, A 4432.
brast, *see* **bresten**.
braune, brawn, muscle, A 546.
brede, breadth, A 2916.
breem, bream (a kind of fish), A 350.
breme, fiercely, A 1699.
bren, bran, B 4430.
brennen (pt. *brente*, pp. *brent*, *ybrent*), burn, A 946.
brenningly, burningly, A 1564.
bresten (pret. 3 person pr. *brest*, *brast*, *brost*, p. *brosten*), burst, break, A 1980.
bret-ful, brimful, A 687.
brinke, edge (of a body of water), HF 803.
brouken, enjoy, B 4490.
browding, embroidery, A 2498.
Brute, Brutus, *Comp. Purse*, 22.
bulte, bolt, B 4430.
Burdeuxward, Bordeauxward, A 397.
burdoun, burden, second or bass, A 673.
burgeys, burgess, A 369.
burned, burnished, B 4054.
Burnel, A 4502 (*see* note).
but, but if, unless, A 351.
buxumnesse, submission, *Truth*, 15.
by and by, side by side, A 1011.

caas (pl. *caas*), case at law, A 323.
cadence, a term in prosody, HF 623 (*see* note).
Cadme, Cadmus, A 1546.
caitif, captive in evil case, A 924.
caityf, captive; wretched person, wretch, C 728.
Calistopee, Calisto, A 2056.
cantel, piece, A 3008.
Capaneus, Capaneus, A 932.
careyne, corpse, A 2013.
carf, *see* **kerve**.
carl, churl, fellow, chap, A 545.
carpen, chat, A 474.
Cartage, Carthage, A 404.
carte, chariot, A 2041.
cas, chance, accident, chance happening, A 844.
caste, sly device, sleight, A 2468.
casten, judge, A 2172.
casuelly, happening by chance, HF 679.
catel, chattels, property, A 373.
Caunterbury, Canterbury, A 22.
causeles, without cause or reason, HF 667.
ceint, girdle, belt, A 329.
celle, a monastic house dependent upon a larger monastery, A 172.
cerial, denoting a kind of oak, the *Quercus cerris*, A 2290.
certein, certain; *certein of conclusiouns*, certain (number) of problems, TA.
ceruce, white lead, A 630.
champartye, equality, A 1949.
chauntrie, chauntry, an endowment to pay for masses for the founder's soul or some similar purpose, A 510.
chapelayne, chaplain; here, a nun appointed to recite the lesser services in the chapel of a convent, A 164.
chapman, merchant, A 398.
char, chariot, car, A 2138.
charge, load, burden: care, trouble, A 2287; that which has weight, a heavy thing, HF 746.
chasteyn, chestnut, A 2922.
chees, choose, A 1595.
Chepe, Cheapside, A 754.
chere, face; manner, behavior; entertainment; pleasure, A 139.
chevisaunce, borrowing, A 282.
chirking, harsh noises, A 2004.
chivachye, military expedition, A 85.
chivalrye, knightly prowess, A 865.
chydinge, chiding, reproof, angry speech, HF 1028.
Citheroun, Cithæron, A 1936.
citole, a kind of harp, A 1959.
citryn, lemon-colored, greenish-yellow, A 2167.
clarree, a clear wine, or more generally, a drink of spiced wine sweetened with honey, A 1471.
clause, sentence; *in a clause*, in a brief space, A 1763.
Clemence, Clementia, Clemency, Mercy, A 928.
clepen, call, A 121.
clerk, a cleric; hence, a theological student, or, later, a student in general; hence, one who reads or writes books, a writer, A 1163.
clothered, clotted, A 2745.
clothes, tapestries, A 2281.
clout, rag, C 736.
cloysterer, a monk (as living in a cloister), A 259.
colde, chill, harmful, B 4446.
coler, collar, A 2152.
colera, choler, B 4018 (see note).
colfox, a variety of fox with more black in its fur than the common varieties, brant-fox, B 4405.
Coloigne, Cologne, A 466.
coloure, specious reasoning, plausible explanation, HF 859.

colpon, bunch, bundle, separate portion, A 679.
communes, commons, commoners, people not of noble, knightly, or gentle rank, A 2509.
compas, circle, circumference; outer bounding circle, HF 798.
compassinge, doing, accomplishment, A 1996.
compeer, comrade, friend, A 670
compilatour, compiler, TA.
compleynte, lamentation, HF 924
composicioun, agreement, arrangement, A 2651.
compownen, compound, compose, construct, HF 1029.
conclusioun, a proposition or problem, TA.
condescende, n, give way to, yield, TA.
condicioun, condition in life, manner and behavior, A 38.
confiture, mixture, C 862.
confounden, overwhelm, *To Rosemounde*, A 10.
connen (pr. *can, cunnen;* pret. ind. *couthe, coude;* pret. subj. *couthe, coude;* pp. *couthe*), know, be able, can, A 110.
conseil, *see* **counseil**.
conservatif, conservative, insuring the existence or quality of, HF 847.
conseyven, gain a conception or understanding of, TA.
Constantyn, Constantinus, A 433.
constellacioun, constellation; here in a special sense, the relative position of several planets at a particular time as affecting events on earth, A 1087.
contek, strife, A 2003.
cop, top, A 554.
cope, a long cloak (used specifically the robe of a friar), A 260.
corage, heart, inner being, A 11.
corne, corn (that is, as now in English use, wheat); *pl.*, grains of corn, HF 697.
corrumpable, corruptible, A 3010.
cote, cat; dungeon, A 2457.
cote, dress, B 4026.
cote-armure, a surcoat embroidered with the arms of a knight, a coat of arms, A 1016.
coude, *see* **connen**.
counseil, counsel, judgment, belief, A 1141; confidant, A 1147; secret understanding, C 819.
countenance, behavior, B 1893.
countour, auditor of accounts, A 359.
countrefeten, copy, imitate, A 139.
cours, course, A 2549.
courtepy, short coat, A 290.
couthe (pp. of **conne**), known, hence, well-known, 14; (as adv.) clearly or familiarly, as being well understood, HF 757.
covercle, cover of a pot or other vessel, HF 792.
covyne, underhand dealing, A 604.
coy, quiet, shy, A 119.
cracching, scratching, A 2834
crafty, skillful, A 1897.
Creon, Creon, A 938.
Cresus, Crœsus, A 1946.
Crete, Crete, A 980.
Cristofre, image of St. Christopher, A 115.
croked, crooked; that which is crooked or wrong, *Truth*, 9.
crokke, crock, *Truth*, 12.
crop, bough, tree top, A 7.
crydestow, criedst thou, A 1083.
crulle, curled, A 81.
Cupido, Cupid, A 1963.
cure, care; *took he most cure*, gave he most attention, A 303.
curious, careful; skillful, A 677; complex or difficult, TA.
curteis, curteys, courteous, A 99.

curteisly, courteously; in gracious wise, *To Rosemounde*, 14.
curteisye, courtesy, etiquette, A 132.
cut, lot, A 835.

daliaunce amusing, trifling, light and pleasant talk, A 211; *don* or *have daliaunce*, make advances with pleasant talk, make sport, B 1894.
Damascien, Damascenus, A 433.
dame, lady; used as a title of respect for elderly persons, which in modern times came to be applied exclusively to persons of humble rank; by metonymy, mother, C 684.
dan, master (as a title), HF 916.
Dane, Danaë, A 2062.
darreynen, decide a claim, contest, A 1609.
daswed, dazed, HF 668.
daunce, dance; *in the daunce*, among the number, with those, HF 639.
dauncen, dance, game, sport, fashion, A 476.
daunger, domination, control, A 663.
daungerous, harsh, forbidding, A 517.
daunten, daunt, subdue, control, *Truth*, 13.
dawen, to become day, break, A 1676.
debat, debate, strife, contest, A 1754.
dede, deed, *also pl.* deeds, doings, *Truth*, 13.
deden, grow dead, grow numb, be palsied, HF 552.
deduyt, pleasure, A 2177.
deedly, death-like, A 1082.
deel, part, A 3064.
degree, step, A 1890.
delivere, quick of movement, alert, active, A 84.
deliveren, deliver, grant deliverance, *Truth*, 7.
deliverly, quickly, B 4606.
Delphyn, Delphenus, the Dolphin, HF 1006.
demen, judge, consider, think, A 1353.
demeine, manage, HF 959.
departen, part, A 1134.
depeynted, depicted, A, 2027.
deren, harm, spoil, A 1822.
derre, dearer, A 1448.
Dertemouthe, Dartmouth, A 389.
despitous, unpitying, 516.
despit, despyt, spite, malice, A 941.
destreynen, oppress, distress, A 1455.
devoir, duty, A 2598.
devys, contrivance; disposition, direction, A 816.
devysen, describe, A 34; direct, A 1425.
deye, dairywomen, B 4036.
Deyiscorides, Descorides, A 430.
deyntee, of worth, excellent, A 168.
deys, dais, A 370.
Diane, Diana, A 1682.
diapred, adorned with a pattern of flowers or arabesque, A 2158.
digne, worthy, dignified; standing upon dignity, haughty, A 140.
dim, dark or obscure; also, not clear to the hearing or understanding, A 2433.
dint, stroke, HF 534.
disconfiture, discomfiture, defeat, A 1008.
disjoint, a difficult or critical position; *with no disjoint*, without being put into difficulties, A 2962.
disjoynt, failure, A 2962.
dispence, expenditure, A 441.
dispitously, with grief and anger, wrathfully, A 1124.
disposicioun, position, disposition; in astrology, the position of a planet in a horoscope as affecting a man's life, or some event, A 1087.
disport, sport, gayety, sociability, A 137.
disporten, make sport of, joke, rally, HF 571.

divisioun, difference, A 1780; also, part, province, A 2024.
divyning, making forecasts or conjectures, A 2515.
divynis, divines, theologians, A 1323.
doctrine, teaching, TA.
dome, judgment, decision, A 323.
don (ind. pr. pl. *don*, pret. *dide;* subj. pr. *do*, *don*), do, make, effect; cause (a thing to be done, which is specified by following infinitive), A 78; *doon diligence*, use (one's) diligence, A 2470.
dormant, literally "sleeping"; *table dormant*, a side table constantly standing and in use (as contrasted with the tables set up for meals and cleared away afterwards), A 353.
dread, fear; doubt, A 1593.
drecched, distressed, B 4077.
dredful, fearful, timorous, A 1479.
dressen, arrange, order, put in order, A 106.
dreynte, drowned, HF 923.
droghte, drought, A 2.
droupen, droop in flight, A 107.
druggen, drudge, A 1416.
duren, last, A 1360.
dyken, dig, A 536.
dys, dice, A 1238.

ecclesiaste, cleric, A 708.
Ecclesiaste, Ecclesiasticus, A 4519.
effect, result, conclusion, A 1189.
elde, age, A 2447.
elvish, elfish, B 1893 (*see* note).
Elye, Elias, HF 588.
Emelye, Emily, A 972.
Emetreus, Emetrius, A 2156.
emforth, to the extent of, A 2235.
encombred, burdened, A 1718.
encombrous, burdensome, HF 862.
enditen, indite, write; compose (verse), A 95; frame (a document), A 325.
endyting, writing, composing, manner of composing, TA.
engendring, engendering, begetting, HF 968.
engin, intellectual ability, cleverness, TA.
enhorten, exhort, A 2851.
Enok, Enoch, HF 588.
envyned, provided with a store of wine, A 342.
entendement, understanding, HF 983.
ententifly, attentively, HF 616.
entunen, intone, A 123.
Epicurus, Epicurus, A 336.
erchedekne, archdeacon, A 655.
ere, plow, A 887.
erste, first; *at erste*, for the first time, A 512.
eschaungen, exchange, A 278.
eschewed, avoided, B 4528.
Esculapius, Esculapius, A 431.
esen, care for, make comfortable, A 29.
espyen, spy, C 755; perceive, HF 944.
estatlich, stately, A 140.
estatly, stately, dignified, A 281.
estres, inner parts, A 1971.
esy, light, moderate, A 441.
evene, even, straight, proper, in proper wise, A 83.
everich, every, A 241.
everichon, each one, A 31.
evermore, evermore, ever since, A 67.
every-deel, every part, A 368.
experience, experiment, HF 788.
eye, eye; *at eye*, at a glance, A 3016.
eyrisshe, pertaining to the air, HF 932.

falding, kind of rough cloth, A 391.
fantasye, fantasy, fancy, HF 593.
fare, bustle, activity, HF 682.
fare, doing, dealing, A 1809; stir, bustle, HF 1065.

faren (pret. *ferde*), fare, A 1647.
farsed, stuffed, A 233.
favour, favor, help, support, HF 519.
fayn, gladly, A 766.
fecchen (pret. *fette, fet*, pp. *fet*), fetch, A 819.
feithfully, faithfully, in good faith, HF 963.
Femenye, the kingdom of the Amazons, A 866.
fen, a division of an Arabic book, C 890.
fer, far, A 48.
ferde, fear, HF 950.
ferfarthly, completely, A 960.
fermacie, remedy, A 2713.
ferne, far, A 14.
ferre, further, A 2060.
ferreste, farthest, A 394.
ferthing, farthing, bit, A 134.
fest, fist, C 802.
fet, *see* **fecchen**.
fetis, neat, well-made, fine, A 157.
fetisly, with neatness or distinction, admirably, A 124.
fey, faith, A 1126.
figure, shape, form, A 2035; figure of speech, A 499.
fithele, fiddle, A 296.
flatour, flatterer, B 4515.
Flaundres, Flanders, A 84.
Flaundrish, Flemish, A 272.
fleen (pret. *fleigh*), flee, A 1170.
fleen (pret. *fleigh*, pret. pl. *flowen, flyen*, pp. *flowen*), fly, B 4421.
fleigh, *see* **fleen**.
fleten, float, A 2397.
flikeringe, fluttering, A 1962.
flotery, fluttering, unkempt, A 2882.
flowen, *see* **fleen**.
fond, found; *fond hirself*, provided for, B 4019.
footmantel, a mantle or cloak for the feet, used while riding as a habit is used to-day, A 472.
for, in order that, HF 559.
for-as-mechel, for as much, TA.
for-blak, very black, jet-black, A 2144.
force, fors, force; *no fors*, no matter; *by force*, by force of this authority, A 2554.
for-do, foredone, brought to evil, ruined, A 1560.
for-dronke, very drunk, overcome with drink, C 674.
for-leten, given up, "dropped," HF 694.
forme, form, A 2313.
forn-cast, foreordained, predestined, B 4407.
for-old, exceeding old, A 2142.
forpyned, that has pined away, A 205; worn by torment, A 1454.
forster, forester, A 117.
fortunen, derive a fortune from, ascribe a fortune to, A 417.
forward, agreement, promise, pledge, A 33.
forwiting, foreknowledge, B 4433.
forwhy, because, HF 553.
forwrapped, closely wrapped, C 718.
foryeten, forgotten, 1914.
fother, load, A 530.
foudre, bolt of lightning, HF 535.
foundred, foundered, fell, A 2687.
fowl, bird, A 9.
foynen, thrust, direct a blow or blows, A 1654.
frakne, freckle, A 2169.
fredom, generosity, liberality, A 46.
frere, friar, A 208.
freten, eat, A 2019.
fulle, full; *atte fulle*, to the full, completely, A 651.
fyled, filed, polished by filing, A 2152.
Fynystere, Finisterre, A 408.

galauntyne, galantine, a sauce for fish and fowl, *To Rosemounde*, 17.

Galgopheye, Gargaphie, A 2626.
Galice, Galicia, A 466.
galingale, sweet cypress, used as a condiment, A 381.
Galyen, Galen, A 431.
game, sport, HF 822.
gargat, gorge, throat, B 4525.
Gatesden, John Gatesden, A 434.
gat-tothed, with teeth set wide apart, A 468.
gaude grene, green produced by dyeing with weld, a yellowish green, A 2079.
gauded, provided with gauds (larger beads standing for Pater Nosters, inserted after each ten smaller beads standing for Ave Marias), A 159.
Gaufred, Geoffrey de Vinsauf, B 4537.
Gaunt, Ghent, A 448.
gay, fine, A 111.
gayne, gain, avail, profit, A 1176.
Genilon, Ganelon, A 4417.
gentil, gentle, noble in rank or character, A 72.
gere, change, alternation of mood, A 1372.
gere, gear, arms, A 1016.
gerful, changeful, A 1538.
Gerland, Gerland, Garland, a proper name, B 4573.
Gernade, Granada, A 56.
gery, changeable, A 1536.
gessen, guess, suppose, think, A 117.
gigginge, fastening the straps (for handles), A 2504.
Gilbertyn, Gilbertus Anglicus (?), A 434.
ginnen (pret. sing. *gonne*, pl. *gonne*, *gunnen*), begin, HF 944.
gipoun, a close-fitting garment for the body like a doublet, A 75.
gipser, pouch, A 357.
girle, youth (of either sex), A 664.
glader, gladdener, A 2223.
glaringe, glaring, shining, glassy, A 684.
glede, burning coal, A 1997.
gobet, piece, A 696.
gold-hewen, gold-hewn, made of gold, A 2500.
golde, marigold, A 1929.
goliardeys, loose and ribald talker, A 560.
gon (pret. *yede*, also by usage as now, *wente*, properly pret. of *wenden*), go, A 12.
gonne, *see* **ginnen**.
goodly, kindly, HF 565.
Gootland, the island of Gottland in the Baltic sea, A 408.
gost, spirit, A 2768.
governance, **governaunce**, government, control; skill in management, HF 945; demeanor, A 281.
graunge, granary, HF 698.
graunte, assent, A 786.
gree, degree, rank, high quality; degree of achievement, A 2733.
Grekes, Greeks, A 2951.
greve, grove; *pl.*, sprays, A 1507.
griffon, griffin, A 2133.
gropen, test, A 644.
ground, stuff, A 453.
groyning, grumbling, murmuring, A 2460.
grucchen, grudge, A 3045.
gruf, groveling, face to earth, A 949.
grys, gray fur, A 194.
guerdoun, reward, HF 619.
gyen, guide, direct, A 1950.
gyse, mode, way, A 993.

habergeoun, coat of mail, A 76.
habounden, abound, *To Rosemounde*, 12.
halp, *see* **helpen**.
halt, *see* **holden**.

halwe, saint, hence the shrine of a saint, A 14. Cf. *Hallowe'en*, the eve of All Saints.
Haly, Holy, A 431.
han, *see* **haven**.
hardily, boldly; surely, A 156.
hardy, bold, courageous, A 882.
harlot, servant; vicious person, A 647.
harneis, harneys, equipment for battle, arms and armor, war gear, A 1613.
harneised, harnessed, equipped, A 114.
harre, hinge, A 550.
hasardour, gamester, C 751.
hasardrie, gaming, C 897.
hauberk, coat of mail, A 2500.
haunt, dwelling place; place of resort; experience, skill, A 447.
haven, han (pres. pl. *han*, pret. *hadde*, *hade*), have, keep, A 490.
hawe, haw, yard, C 855.
he, he; also as an indef. pron., one, another, A 2612.
heed, head, HF 1021.
heeth, heath, uncultivated open land, A 6.
hegge, hedge, B 4408.
helpen (pret. *holp*, *heelp*, pp. *holpen*), help, A 18.
henne, hence, C 687.
hennesforth, henceforth, HF 782.
henten (pret. *hente*), seize, take, get, A 299.
herberwe, harborage, A 403.
herde, herdsman, A 643.
Hereos, Eros, A 1374.
herknen, harken, HF 725.
hert, hart, stag, A 1681.
herte, heart, A 150.
herte-spoon, the hollow place in the breast when the ribs join and form the *cartilago ensiformis*, A 2606.
hest, behest, command, A 2532.
heten (pret. *hette*), promise, A 239.
hethenesse, heathendom, A 49.
heven (pt. *haf*, *heef*), heave, lift up, A 550.
heyre, hair, haircloth, C 736.
highte, *see* **hoten**.
hir, of them, A 586.
ho, ho! a cry for silence, A 2533.
holden (3 pr. sing. *halt*, pt. *heeld*, pp. *holden*), hold, keep, consider, esteem, A 141.
holt, wood, woodland, A 6.
honestly, honorably, A 1444.
honte, hunt, A 1674.
hool, whole, A 3006.
hoomly, in homely or simple style, A 328.
hoppesteres, dancers; (used as an adjective), dancing, A 2017.
hoten (pret., used also as present, sing. *hatte*, *hette*, *heet*, *hight*, *highte*, pl. *hatten*, *heeten*, *highten*; pp. *hoten*, *hight*), order, command, promise; also (the only remaining examples of an inflected passive), be called, A 1557.
houpen, whoop, B 4590.
housbondrie, husbanding, thrifty care, B 4018.
howle, cry aloud, A 2817.
Hulle, Hull, A 404.
humblinge, rumbling, HF 1039.
humour, one of the four qualities or dispositions of the body, hot, cold, dry, moist, which in combination, according to the old theory of medicine, determine the characteristic physical state of a person, and his health or disease at any time, A. 421.
hunte, hunter, A 2018.
hyne, servant, churl, A 603.

image, an image; here, one of a patient under treatment used in applying "natural magic" to his cure, A 418.

Inde, India, A 2156.
inequal, unequal, A 2271.
innen, provide with lodging, A 2192.

janglere, joker, teller of idle gossip, A 560.
jape, joke, trick, A 705.
jet, fashion, A 682.
journee, day's journey, A 1738.
Julian, Julian, A 340.
Julius, Julius Cæsar, A 2031.
justen, joust, A 96.
juwyse, **juyse**, judgment, sentence, A 1739.

keep, heed, A, 1389.
kempe, rough, A 2134.
kennen, ken, know, perceive, HF 498.
kepen, take care, heed; take care of; retain, keep, A 130.
kerven (pt. *carf*, pp. *carven*, *ycarve*), carve, cut, A 100.
knarre, a knot in wood; figuratively, one heavily built and muscular, A 551.
knarry, gnarled, A 1977.
knave, boy, C 666.
kynde, nature, HF 574.
kyndeliche, that pertaineth to nature, HF 829.
kyndely, naturally, HF 831.
kyndly, natural, that pertains to nature, HF 730.
kythen, show, display, HF 528.

laas, lace, A 392.
lacerte, muscle, A 2753.
lafte, *see* **leven**.
large, large, A 472; *adv.*, freely, A 734.
large, large; *at his large*, at freedom to do as he pleases, A 2288.
las, lace, noose, snare, A 1817.
lasse, less; *lasse and more*, of low and high degree, A 1756.
latoun, latten, an alloy of copper and zinc, A 699.
launde, an open grassy place among trees, A 1691.
laurer, laurel, A 2922.
lay, *see* **lyen**.
laynere, a thong or lacing, A 2504.
lazar, leper, A 242.
lede (3 pers. pres. sing. *ledeth*, *let*; pret. sing. *ledde*, *ladde*, pl. *ledden*, *ladden*; pp. *lad*, *ylad*), lead, bring, convey, drive, A 530.
leepen (pret. *leep*), leap, A 2687.
leet, *see* **leten**.
leme, gleam, flare, B 4020.
lenen, lend, A 611.
leren, learn, HF 511.
lesen (pret. *lees*, pp. *loren*), lose, A 1215.
lesing, losing, loss, A 1707.
lesinge, lying, lie, HF 676.
lest, pleasure, interest, A 132.
leste, *see* **liste**.
leten (pret. *leet*, *let*, *lete*; imp. *leet*, *lat*; pp. *laten*), let, leave, give up; *lat be*, let go, leave, give up, A 508.
letten, prevent, stand in the way of, hinder, A 889.
Lettow, Lithuania, A 54.
letuarie, a paste of honey or other sweetmeat mixed with a drug to disguise its taste, A 426.
leve, dear, HF 816.
leven (pret. *lafte*, *lefte*, pp. *laft*, *left*), leave; leave off, refrain, A 492.
leven, believe, HF 708.
levere, liefer, more agreeable, A 293.
lewed, ignorant, A 502.
lewedly, in an unlearned or simple way, HF 866.
leyen (pret. *leye*, *leyd*, pp. *leyd*), lay A 81; lay a bet, wager, HF 674.
licentiat, licentiate, A 220.
liche-wake, lyke-wake, watch over a dead body, A 2958.

lief, dear one, B 4069.
lighten, alight, descend, HF 508.
limitour, limiter, A 209.
linage, lineage, A 1829.
lind, linden, A 2922.
lipse, lisp, A 264.
liste, leste (pret. *liste, leste*), please (often used impersonally), A 102.
listes, the inclosed space arranged for tournaments or other formal combats, A 1884.
litarge, litharge, A 629.
lith, limb, B 4065.
lodemenage, pilotage, A 403.
lode-sterre, load-star, north star, A 2059.
loken, locked, B 4065.
loking, glance, A 2469.
longen, long, desire, A 12.
longen, belong, A 2278.
lore, lore, teaching, HF 579.
losengeour, liar, B 4516.
love-daye, a day appointed for settling differences by arbitration, instead of legal action, A 258.
lowe, low; of feathers in archery, having the flues inclined at a sharp angle to the rib and therefore not directing the flight of the arrow properly, A 107; in humble fashion, A 1405.
lowly, modest, humble, A 99.
Loy, Eligius, A 120.
luce, luce, pike, A 350.
Lucina, Lucina, A 2085.
lust, pleasure, A 192.
luxurie, lechery, C 897.
lyen (pret. *lay*), lie, stay, A 20.
Lyeys, Ayas (formerly Layas), A 58.
Lygurge, Lycurgus, A 2129.
lyked, it pleased, A 2092.
lykenesse, similarity, illustrations of similar things, A 2842.
lyte, little, lowly, A 494.
lyves, living, HF 1063.

Macedo, of Macedon, HF 915.
maistrye, mastery; *for the maistrye*, for the mastery (to excel others if competing or compared with them), superlatively, A 165.
make, mate, rival, A 2556.
male, chest, A 694.
Malkin, a nickname for *Matilda* or *Maude*, A 4574.
manasing, threatening, A 2035.
mansioun, dwelling, A 1974.
mappemounde, *mappa mundi*, map of the world, *To Rosemounde*, A 2.
marchal, marshal; here, an officer in charge of the seating of guests and similar matters of ceremony.
Marte, Mars, A 2021.
marybones, marrowbones, 380.
mat, cast down, overcome, A 955.
Maudelayne, Magdalen, A 409.
maugre, despite; *maugre hie heed*, despite his head, even should he suffer death, A 1169.
maunciple, manciple, A 544.
Maure, St. Maur, A 173.
maydenhede, maidenhood, A 2329.
mede, meed, reward, *Truth*, 27.
medlee, of mixed color, A 328.
Meleagre, Meleager, A 2071.
melten (pret. *malt*, pp. *molte*), melt, HF 922.
mercy, 'thanks,' A 1950.
meschief, mischance, misfortune, trouble, A 493; difficulty, A 2551.
mester, way of life, A 1340.
mete (pret. *mette*, pp. *met*), meet, A 1524.
mete (pret. *mette*, pp. *met*), dream, HF 517.
meth, mead, A 2279.
mette, *see* **mete**.
meven, move, HF 813.
mewe, coop for fattening fowls or game, A 348.
meynee, household, A 1258.

Middelburgh, Middelburg, A 277 (*see* note).
Minotaur, the monster that Theseus killed in the labyrinth in Crete, A 980.
miracle, story of a miracle, legend, B 1881.
mirthe, pleasure, entertainment, A 759.
misboden, threatened, offered injury, A 909.
mister, trade, craft, A 613; *what mister men*, men of what calling, what kind of men, A 1710.
mo, more, HF 685.
moot (pret. *moste*, subj. pr. *moot*, *mote*), must, may, A 232.
more, more; larger, HF 500.
mormal, sore, A 386.
mortreux, thick soups, A 384.
morwe, morning, A 334.
mosel, muzzle, A 2151.
mottelee, motley, A 271.
mountance, amount, A 1570.
mowen (pr. *may*, pret. *mighte*), be able, can, A 169.
multiplicacioun, multiplication; the process by which (something — here a sound) is multiplied and carried on, HF 784.

naker, kettledrum, A 2511.
nam, *ne am*, am not, A 1122.
namo, no more, A 544.
narette, *ne arrete*, ascribe not, A 726.
narwe, narrow, small, B 4012.
natheles, nevertheless, A 35.
neden, need, be necessary, HF 575.
nedely, under necessity, B 4434.
nedes-cost, of necessity, A 1477.
neet, neat, cattle, A 597.
nere, *ne were*, were not, A 875.
Nero, Nero, A 2032.
nevenen, name, HF 562.
never-a-del, never-a-bit, not at all, C 670.
nexte, nearest, A 1413.
nice, particular, scrupulous, A 388; foolish, HF 920.
nolde, *ne wolde*, would not; would not (take), A 1024.
nones, nonce; *for the nonys*, for a special purpose or for the time being (often used by Chaucer as little more than a convenient tag for the rime), A 379.
noot, *ne wot*, knew not, A 284.
Northfolk, Norfolk, A 619.
nose-thirle, nostril, A 557.
notabilitee, fact or truth worth remembering, B 4399.
not-heed, nut-head, a head round like a nut, A 109.
nothing, nothing; *adv.*, in no wise, B 4030.
nouthe, now, A 462.
novelrye, novelty, HF 686.
noyous, bothersome, HF 574.
nyghtertale, nighttime, 97.

o, one, A 304.
obeisaunce, obedience, A 2974.
oon, one; *after oon*, after one sort (the best), A 341; *in oon*, ever in one way, without change, without ceasing, A 1771; same, like, A 1012.
opie, opium, A 1472.
or, ere, HF 1055.
oratorie, oratory, chapel, A 1905.
ordeyned, fixed, prepared, A 2553.
ordinaunce, order, arrangement, A 2567.
Orewell, Orwell, A 277.
orisoun, prayer, A 2261.
orizonte, horizon; the great circle of the earth whose plane is parallel to the sensible horizon of a given place, TA.

orlogge, a timepiece of any kind; horologe; *specif.*, a clock, B 4044.
ounce, ounce, small piece; *by ounces*, in separate pieces, A 677.
out-hees, outcry, A 2012.
outher, either, A 1485.
outrydere, one who rides abroad; here, a monk appointed to act as inspector of the manors, etc., of a monastery, A 166.
out-twyne, twist out, untwine, *To Rosemounde*, 11.
overal, everywhere, A 4.
overest, outermost, A 290.
overte, open, of a nature to yield access, HF 718.
oowhor, anywhere, A 653.
Oxenford, Oxford, A 285.

pace, pass, proceed, A 36.
Palatye, Palathia, A 65.
paleys, palace, HF 1090.
palfrey, a saddle horse as distinguished from a charger, or war-horse, A 207.
palmer, palmer, A 13.
pan, skull-pan, head, A 1165.
parament, a rich mantle or cloak, A 2501.
par amour, paramours, with passion, passionately, A 1155, 2112.
paraventure, peradventure, perhaps, HF 792.
pardee, F. *par Dieu*, by God, verily, A 563.
pardoner, pardoner, A 543.
parfey, in faith, HF 938.
parfit, parfyt, perfect, A 72.
parlement, deliberation; conclusion, A 1306.
parte, part, side, A 2582.
partye, part, A 3008.
parvys, the church porch of St. Paul's, the customary meeting place of lawyers, A 310.
pas, pace, step, a walk, A 825.
passen, pass, surpass, overcome, A 3089.
payen, pagan, A 2370.
pecok-arwes, arrows feathered with peacock feathers, A 104.
penance, penance; woe, distress, *To Rosemounde*, 14.
Penneus, Peneus, A 2064.
penoun, pennon, A 978.
perfitly, perfectly, TA.
Perotheus, Pirotheus, A 1191.
perrye, jeweled work, A 2936.
pers, blue; also, a cloth of blue color, A 439.
persoun, parson, A 478.
persuasioun, persuasion; convincing argument, HF 872.
peyne, pain, torture; *for to dyen in the peyne*, under penalty of dying under torture, A 1133.
Pheton, Phaeton, HF 942.
Philostrate, A 1728.
Physiologus, Physiologus, A 4461.
pighte, pitched, A 2689.
piled, thinned out, A 627.
pilour, pillager, despoiler, A 1007.
pilwe-beer, pillowcase, A 694.
pinchen, find fault, A 326.
plat, flat, final, A 1845.
Platon, Plato, HF 759.
plentevous, plenteous, A 344.
plesaunce, pleasure, delight, *To Rosemounde*, 22.
pleyen, play, take pleasure, sport, A 1195.
pleyn, full, complete, A, 315.
point, poynt, point; A 114; aim, A 1501; *in good point*, in good condition, A 200; *at point devys*, to the exact point, with precision, neatly, HF 917.
pomel, top, A 2689.
pomely, dappled, A 616.

popet, a person who is small and attractive; used as a general term of endearment, like 'dear thing,' 'pet,' C 1891.
poraille, poor folk, A 247.
porter, gate keeper, A 1940.
portreiture, painting, A 1968.
posen, propose a case, set forth, maintain, A 1162.
poudre marchant, a condiment of sharp flavor, A 381.
Poules, St. Paul's, A 509.
pouped, tooted, B 4589.
poure, poor, A 225.
poynaunt, pungent, A 352.
poynt, *see* **point**.
prees, crowd, *Truth*, 1.
prelat, prelate, A 204.
presse, press; *in presse*, in press (by use of curl papers or curling irons), A 81; mold, A 263.
preven, prove; give proof of (something specified or understood), attest, A 485.
pricasour, hard rider, A 188.
priken, drive, urge, spur, stir, A 11.
prikke, point, HF 907.
privetee, private thought, hidden council, A 1411.
prive, secret, HF 717.
prolixite, prolixity, HF 856.
proporciouns, equalities of ratio between numbers, the relations existing between numbers in proportion; proportion, TA.
propre, own, 540.
prow, profit, HF 579.
Pruce, Prussia, A 53.
pryme, prime, nine o'clock in the morning, A 2189.
prys, price, estimation, fame, A 67.
Puella, A 2045 (*see* note).
purchas, gain, A 256.
purchasour, conveyancer, A 318.
pure, pure; mere, very, A 1279.
purfiled, embroidered, A 193.
purtreyen, draw, A 96.
purtreyor, one who portrays; a draughtsman or painter, A 1899.
purveyaunce, providence, A 1252.
pye, magpie, HF 703.
pyk, pike, *To Rosemounde*, 17.
pykepurs, pickpocket, A 1998.
pypen, whistle, A 1838.

quaken (pret. *quook*), quake, A 1576.
qualm, sickness, A 2014.
quellen, kill, B 4582.
questioun, questioning, discussion, A 2514.
queynt, quenched, A 2321.
queynte, strange, curious, A 1531.
quike, quik, alive, A 1015; in lively fashion, A 306.
quitly, quite, wholly, A 1792.
quook, *see* **quaken**.
quyten (pret. *quyte*, pp. *quit*), requite, acquit, discharge, ransom, A 770.

rage, sport, play, A 257.
Ram, the zodiacal sign, A 8.
rape, haste, *Adam*, 7.
raughte, *see* **rechen**.
Razis, A 432 (*see* note).
recchen (pret. *roghte*, *roughte*), reck, care, A 1398.
recchen, explain, B 4086.
rechen (pret. *raughte*), reach, give over, A 136.
recorde, bear witness; recall, A 8290.
rede, reed, counsel, advice, A 665.
redily, ready at hand, 2276.
redoutinge, showing dread and awe, worship, reverence, A 2050.
reed, *see* **rede**.
refreyd, chilled, *To Rosemounde*, A 21.
registre, register, record, A 2812.
regne, realm, kingdom, rule, A 866.
reknen, take account, reckon, A 2040.
renden (pt. *rente*, pp. *rent*), rend, A 990.

renge, rank, line, A 2594.
rennen (pt. *ronne*, pp. *ronnen*, *yronne*), run, A 8, cluster naturally, A 2165.
renovelaunce, renewing, HF 693.
rente, income, A 256.
repleccioun, repletion, B 4027.
replicacioun, reply, contradiction, contention, A 1846.
reportour, reporter, recorder, A 814.
resen, shake, A 1986.
respyt, respite, delay, A 948.
reste, rest, repose, *Truth*, 10.
rethor, rhetorician, B 4397.
reve, reeve, A 542.
revel, revelry, A 2717; merrymaking, *To Rosemounde*, 6.
reven (pt. *refte*, pp. *raft*, *yraft*), take away by violence, rob, bereave, A 2015.
reverence, respectful fashion, A 305.
rewen, rue, have pity, A 2233.
reysen, campaign, make war, A 54.
riden (3 pers. pres. sing. *rideth*, *rit*, pret. *rode*), ride, travel, A 45.
rightes, rightly; *at alle rightes*, rightly in every way, A 1852.
rit, rideth, A 974.
rote, root, A 2.
rote, an instrument of the fiddle type, A 236.
rouken, huddle, A 1308.
Rouncivale, Rouncyvalle, A 670.
rouncy, poor horse, nag, A 390.
roundel, round, HF 791.
roundel, rondel, rondeau, short song in a set form, A 1529.
rouned, whispered, HF 722.
route, following, retinue, A 2153.
routen, to sound with a heavy subdued note, said of a loud continuous sound far off, HF 1038.
routhe, ruth, pity, A 914.
Rubens, A 2045 (*see* note).
Rufus, Rufus, A 430.
ruggy, rough, A 2883.

sad, firm, steady, earnest, serious, A 2985.
sadly, firmly, A 2602.
saluen, salute, A 1492.
sangwin, blood-red, A 333.
sarge, serge, A 2568.
Satalye, Adalia, A 58.
sautrye, psaltery, an instrument like a harp, A 296.
save, sage, A 2713.
savour, taste, desire to enjoy, *Truth*, 5.
sawce fleem, salt phlegm; hence, afflicted with salt phlegm, A 625.
sawe, saying, A 1526.
scalle, scab, *Adam*, 3.
scalled, scabby, A 627.
scapen, escape, A 1107.
Scariot, Iscariot, A 4417.
scathe, harm; ill-fortune, a thing to sorrow for, a pity, A 446.
Scithia, Scythia, A 867.
scoleye, study, A 302.
scriptures, writings, A 2044.
scriveyn, scrivener, scribe, *Adam*, 1.
sechen, seek, A 784.
see, sea; *Grete See*, the Mediterranean, A 79.
seeke, sick, A 18.
seen (pret. sing. *sey*, *seigh*, *saugh*; pl. *seyen*, *syen*, pp. *seyn*), see; *God you see*, God behold (and protect, or bless) you, C 715.
seigh, *see* **see**.
selly, unusual, strange, marvelous, HF 513.
selve, self-same, A 2584.
semi-cope, short cope; *see* **cope**, A 262.
sendal, a thin silk, A 440.
sentence, meaning, A 306; matter, thing to be understood, TA; conclusion, decision, HF 877.

Serapion, Serapion, A 432.
sermonen, speak, preach, C 879.
servage, servitude, A 1946.
servysable, dutiful, A 99.
session, a sitting or court (here, the sittings of the Justices of the Peace), A 355.
setten, set; *sette hir aller cappe*, "set the caps of them all," made fools of them all (a proverbial expression), A 586.
seuretee, security, C 937.
seurtee, surety, A 1603.
sewen, follow, B 4527.
seyn, *see* **seen**.
seynd, broiled, B 4035.
shamfast, modest, A 2055.
shamfastness, bashfulness, A 840.
shapen, shape, dispose, direct, arrange, A 809.
shaply, fitted, A 372.
sheeldes, crowns, *écus*, A 278.
shenden (pret. *shente*, pp. *shent*), harm, injure, destroy, A 2754.
shene, bright, beautiful, A 115.
shent, **shente**, *see* **shenden**.
shepne, **sheppin**, sheepcote, A 2000.
shetten, shut, inclose, HF 524.
shirreve, sheriff, A 359.
shiten, befouled, A 504.
shode, forehead, A 2007.
shot, arrow or bolt for a crossbow, A 2544.
shrewe, curse, B. 4616.
shrighte, shrieked, A 2817.
signe, sign; constellation, HF 949.
significavit, the writ for imprisoning an excommunicated person, so called from its opening word, A 662.
sikerly, surely, A 137.
simple, modest, A 119.
sin, since, A 1285.
Sinon, Sinon, A 4418.
sithe, time, A 485.
sithen, since, A 1520.
sitten (pret. *sat*, *seet*; pp. *seten*), sit, A 94.
skille, reason, explanation, HF 726.
slawe, *see* **sleen**.
sleen (pret. *slowe*, *slough*, pp. *slawen*, *slayn*), slay, A 63.
sleere, slayer, A 2005.
sleighte, trickery, A 604.
slider, slippery, A 1264.
slogardye, laziness, A 1042.
slow, *see* **sleen**.
slyly, wisely, cautiously, C 792.
slyly, with discretion, wisely, A 1444.
smoking, incensing, offering incense in, A 2281.
snewed, snowed, A 345.
snibben, snub, rebuke, A 523.
solempne, festive, genial, important, A 208.
solempnely, pompously, A 274.
som-del, somewhat, A 446.
somnour, summoner, A 543.
sonde, sand, HF 691.
soor, sore, afflicted, grieved, A 2220.
soote, sweet, A 1.
sooth, true, certain, HF 502.
sooty, sooty, begrimed with smoke, B 4022.
soothly, truly, A 117.
soren, soar, HF 499.
sort, lot, chance, A 844.
sothfastnesse, truth, *Truth*, 1.
sotil, thin, fine, A 2030; subtle, skillfully made, A 1954.
souninge, in accordance with, A 275.
sours, soaring, rising flight, HF 544.
Southwerk, Southwark, A 20.
space, space; time, length of time, time or opportunity to do a thing; way of doing, A 35.
sparth, battle-ax, A 2520.
special, special; *in special*, in particular, A 444.
sporne, kick, *Truth*, 11.

springen (pt. *sprang*, *sponge*, pp. *sponge*), spring, spread, A 7; spread abroad, A 1437; rise, A 2522.
springen (pp. *spreynd*, *yspreynd*), sprinkle, A 2169.
spronge, *see* **springen**.
spyced, spiced, A 526.
spycerie, spices, A 2935.
Stace, Statius, A 2294.
stake, stake, staff erected to indicate a spot, A 2552.
stant, *see* **stonde**.
stape, advanced, B 4011.
starf, *see* **sterven**.
starke, strong, HF 545.
stellifyen, place among the stars, make a constellation of, HF 586.
stemed, shone, A 202.
stenten (pret. pp. *stente*), stop, A 903.
stepe, bright, A 201.
stere, rudder, *Comp. Purse*, 12.
steren, stir, HF 567.
sterlinges, coins sterling, C 967.
sterre, star; also (probably), constellation, A 2061.
sterte, start, hasten (to go, or to make some motion understood), A 952.
sterven (pret. *starf*, pp. *storven*, *ystarve*), die, A 933.
stevene, voice, B 4481; tone (of voice), HF 561.
stinten, stop, cease, A 2348.
stith, stithy, forge, A 2026.
stonden (3 pers. pres. sing. *stont*, *stant*, pret. *stod*, *stont*, pp. *stonden*), stand, A 354.
stoor, farm stock, 598.
storven, *see* **sterven**.
stot, a horse for daily business use, cob, A 615.
Stratford-atte-Bowe, Stratford-at-Bow, 1047.
straughte, *see* **strecchen**.
strecche (pret. *straughte*, *streight*, pp. *streight*), stretch, A 2916.
streit, strict, A 174.
streite, drawn, B 4547.
streite, tightly, A 457.
streynen, constrain, B 4434.
strike, hank, A 676.
stroof, *see* **stryve**.
stryve (pret. *stroof*, pp. *striven*), strive, A 1038.
stubbe, stump, A 1978.
studien, study, deliberate, think over, A 841.
subtil, skillful, TA.
subtiltee, skill, B 4509.
suffisance, sufficiency, content, B 4029.
suffysen, suffice; *subj.*, let suffice, TA.
surcote, upper or outer coat, A 617.
surete, security, HF 723.
sustren, sisters, A 1019.
suyte, suit; kind (of cloth), A 2873.
swappe, swoop, HF 543.
swelten (pret. pp. *swelte*), die, be overcome, A 1356.
swich, such, A 313.
swink, toil, A 188.
swinken, toil, A 186.
swinker, hard worker, toiler, A 531.
swogh, humming noise, soughing, HF 1031.
swownen, swoon, faint, A 913.
swythe, fast, quickly, HF 538.
syen, *see* **seen**.
syken, sigh, A 1540.

tabard, a loose overgarment, applied to a herald's coat of arms, but here a rough frock like a modern smock frock, A 541.
Tabard, the Tabard inn, A 20.
taille, tally, A 570.
takel, tackle (cf. 'fishing tackle'); in archery, an arrow or (as in reference) a sheaf of arrows, A 106.

takel, tackle, equipment, gear; *specif.*, in archery, arrow or arrows, A 106.
taken (pt. *took*, pp. *taken*), take, A 34.
talen, tell tales, A 772.
tapicer, upholsterer, A 362.
tare, weed, A 1570.
targe, shield, A 471.
Tars, Tartary, A 2160.
tas, mass, A 1005.
taverner, innkeeper, C 685.
tempesten, put oneself in a rage, disturb oneself exceedingly, *Truth*, 8.
temple, an inn of courts, A 567.
tene, harm, wrong, A 3106.
terme, term, date, period; *terme of his lyf*, to the end of his life, A 1029.
termes, terms, phrases: *in termes*, in abstract in set phrases ready for citation, 323.
tester, headpiece, A 2499.
text, text; a passage in writing (not necessarily a Bible 'text'), A 177.
thank, statement of indebtedness; *his thankes*, with his consent, A 1626.
ther, there, thither, where, A 34.
ther-aboute, about that, designing or effecting that, HF 597.
Theseus, Theseus, A 860.
thider, thither, HF 724.
thikke-herd, thick-haired, A 2518.
thing, thing; *specif.*, a document, A 325.
thinken (pret. *thoghte*), seem (used impersonally); *me thinketh*, it seems to me, A 37.
tho, then, A 2597.
thoughte, *see* **thinken**.
thral, thrall, slave, *To Rosemounde*, A 23.
thresten, press, push, A 2612.
thriftily, carefully, A 105.
thurgh-girt, thrust through, A 1010.
tikelnesse, insecurity, *Truth*, 3.
til, to, A 1478.
tipet, cape, A 232.
tithes, payments of a tenth part of the produce of the land (harvests, cattle, etc.) for the support of the church, or an equivalent in money, A 486.
to-bresten (*see* **bresten**), break in pieces, A 2611.
tollen, take toll, A 562.
tonne-greet, great as a tun or hogshead, A 1994.
tool, weapon, B 4106.
to-rende (pt. *to-rente*, pp. *to-rent*), tear in pieces, C 709.
toret, eyelet in which to fasten rings, A 2152.
touret, turret, A 1909.
Trace, Thrace, A 1638.
Tramyssene, Tremessen, A 62.
trapped, with trappings, A 2157.
trays, traces, A 2139.
tresorere, treasurer, *Comp. Purse*, 18.
tretis, treatise, TA.
tretys, of suitable size, well-formed, A 152.
trone, throne, A 2529.
trouthe, troth, pledge, A 1610.
trowen, believe, A 155.
tweye, two, A 898.
twinnen, separate, part; go on, or away, A 835.
tyne, barrel, *Rosemounde*, 9.

undergrowe, under proper size, A 156.
undern, between nine and twelve o'clock, forenoon, B 4412.
undertaken (*see* **taken**), manage an undertaking, A 405.
unethe, **unethes**, hardly, with difficulty, HF 699.
up, up; *armed up*, fully armed, A 1852.
up-haf (*see* **heven**), upheaved, 2428.
upper, further upward, HF 884.
upriste, uprising, A 1051.

up-yelden (pt. *up-yald*, pp. *up-yolden*), yield up, A 3052.
usage, usage, habit, custom, 'ways,' A 110.
usurpen, make pretense, TA.

vache, Fr. *vache*, cow, *Truth*, 22.
vavasour, one who held his land by knight's service, though not, like a baron, in direct fee from the king, A 360.
venerye, hunting, A 166.
ventusinge, cupping, A 2747.
verdit, verdict, judgment, A 787.
vernicle, a copy of St. Veronica's handkerchief (*see* note), A 685.
verray, true, very, A 1551; *adv.*, truly, HF 1079.
vese, rush, A 1985.
veyne-blood, letting of blood from a vein, A 2747.
viage, journey, A 77.
vigilyes, vigils, morning service; here, festivities held on the eve of the gild day, A 377.
vileinye, low, common, especially lewd conduct or talk; ill-breeding, rudeness, A 726.
vitaille, victuals, A 248.
Vulcanus, Vulcan, A 2222.

wake-pleyes, A 2960 (*see* note).
walwed, immersed, soused, *To Rosemounde*, 17.
wanhope, despair, A 1249.
wantoun, heedless, wanton, A 208.
war, prudent, A 309.
warycen, cure, amend, C 906.
wasshen (pt. *wessh*), wash, A 2283.
waste, wasted, ruined, A 1331.
wastel-bread, bread of the finest quality (not the inferior bread made from coarse flour, or other grains and lentils usually given to dogs and horses), A 147.
Watte, Wat, nickname for *Walter*, A 643.
wawe, wave, A 1958.
webbe, weaver, A 3621.
wedde, pledge, pawn; *to wedde*, in pledge, as security, A 1218.
wele, wealth, *Truth*, 4.
wele, weal, welfare, HF 684.
welked, withered, C 738.
wende (pret. *wente*, pp. *went*), wend, make one's way, A 16.
were, doubt, HF 979.
weren, guard, A 2550.
weren (pt. *wore*, *werede*, pp. *warn*), wear, A 75.
werken, work, do, *Truth*, 5.
werre, war, A 47.
werreyen, make war, A 1484.
wessh, *see* **wasshen**.
wexen (pret. *wex*, pp. *woxen*), grow, wax, A 1362.
weye, way; space of time; *atte beste weye*, for the shortest time (at least), A 1121.
weymentinge, lamentation, A 902.
what, what; as interjection, what then, why, lo, A 854.
whelke, pimple, A 632.
whelpe, whelp, small dog, puppy, A 257.
wher, whether, HF 586.
which a, what a, A 2675.
whippeltree, cornel, or dogwood, A 2923.
wight, weight, HF 739.
wight, person, A 71.
wikke, wicked, A 1580.
wilnen, desire, wish, A 2564.
wirchen, work, A 2759.
witen (1 prs. sing. pr. *wot*, 2 pr. *woost*, *wost*, pl. *witen*, pt. *wiste*, pp. *wist*), know, expect, A 224.
withholde (*see* **holden**), shut up, secluded, A 511.
witing, knowledge, A 1611.

wol, wel (pr. ind. sing. 1. *wil, wol,* 2. *wilt, wolt, wol,* 3. *wil, wol;* pl. *wil, wol, wiln, woln;* pret. ind. *wolde;* pr. subj. *wile, wolle;* pret. subj. *wolde;* pp. *wold*), will, wish, desire, A 27.
wolde, *see* **wol.**
wolle, wool, C 910.
wonder, marvelous, A 2073.
wone, wont, custom, A 335.
wonen, dwell, A 388.
woning, dwelling, A 606.
wood, mad; angry, A 184.
woodly, madly, A 1301.
woot, *see* **witen.**
wortes, herbs, vegetables, B 4411.
worthy, excellent, of distinguished worth, of high repute, A 47.
wost, *see* **witen.**
wrecche, wretched, unfortunate, HF 919.
wreken, avenge, C 857.
wympel, wimple, a covering for the neck and throat, A 151.

yaf, *see* **yeve.**
ybete, *see* **beten.**
ybrent, *see* **brennen,** A 946.
ycarve, *see* **kerven.**
ychaped, capped, A 366.
ye, eye, A 10.
yeddinge, a song of the nature of a ballad, A 237.
yeldhalle, guildhall, A 376.
yelpen, boast, A 2238.
yemanly, in a way befitting a thrifty yeoman, A 106.
yerde, stick, rod, A 149.
yerne, eagerly; *as yerne,* very eagerly, HF 910.
yeven (pt. *yaf,* pp. *yeven*), give, A 225.
yis, yes (in strong asseveration as compared with *ye,* yea), HF 706.
ylad, *see* **leden.**
ymeynd, mixed, A 2170.
yore, formerly; *of yore agon,* of long ago, A 1941.
youling, wailing, A 1278.
Ypocras, Hippocrates, A 431.
Ypolita, Hippolyta, A 868.
Ypres, Ypres, in Flanders, A 448.
yronne, *see* **rennen.**
ystorve, *see* **sterven.**
ywroght, made, A 196.
ywryen hid, covered, A 2904.

Zephirus, Zephyr, the west wind, A 5.